

IN PURGATORY: MAYAN IMMIGRANTS IN INDIANTOWN  
AND WEST PALM BEACH, SOUTH FLORIDA

By

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In Purgatory is dedicated to Kathleen Ann Gladden and to my children Antonio and Emilio. They three, my inspiration.

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PREFACE  
PHOTOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION  
OF IN PURGATORY

This preface is intended to give the reader of the dissertation the images of the people, the places, and the situations that are later described and analyzed in words in the text.

The pictorial contents show the people, the places, and some of the events and rituals of the different ethnic groups in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, in South Florida.

Complementary pictures are included in some chapters with the same purpose indicated above.

All of the photographs were taken by Julián Arturo.



FIGURE P-1  
THE PEOPLE, THREE GENERATIONS OF MAYANS



FIGURE P-2  
THE PEOPLE, MAYANS AT SOCCER GAME



FIGURE P-3  
THE PEOPLE, WHITES



FIGURE P-4  
THE PEOPLE, MEXICANS



FIGURE P-5  
THE PLACE, SEMINOLE INN AND MAIN STREET



FIGURE P-6  
THE PLACE, THE NEW LIBRARY



FIGURE P-7  
FOURTH OF JULY, WHITE INDIANS



FIGURE P-8  
FOURTH OF JULY, BLACKS



FIGURE P-9  
FOURTH OF JULY, MAYANS





FIGURE P-10  
VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE CELEBRATION



FIGURE P-11  
VIRGIN OF GUADALUPE CELEBRATION



FIGURE P-12  
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FIGURE P-13  
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FIGURE P-15  
COLLECTIVE MAYAN WEDDING

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

IN PURGATORY: MAYAN IMMIGRANTS IN INDIANTOWN  
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By

Julián Arturo

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Chairperson: Paul Doughty  
Major Department: Anthropology

This dissertation explores what it means for Mayan immigrants to have a "semi-legal" status in an American multi-ethnic society. The ordeals that Mayans and other Caribbean and Central American immigrants have to endure in order to live in the United States constitute a special kind of legal and cultural Purgatory. This anomie is exacerbated by growing tensions among whites, blacks and Chicanos in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, South Florida, as their neighborhoods become increasingly multiethnic.

Structural economic and political forces push immigrants into Florida: the violence in Guatemala, the economic situation in Mexico, and the chaos of Haiti. The same processes producing the migration are also at work in South Florida because of the native agribusiness and other industries that need a cheap labor force.

Despite the poverty and uncertainty, Mayans are "making it," improving their economic situation and becoming socially adjusted, while preserving their traditions, through familiar cultural strategies that include spatial mobility, work diversification, and the formation of effective social networks.

Ethnic organizations have flourished in the last years as part of the Mayan cultural strategy and their incorporation in the region. But, being enmeshed in the legal complications of asylum applications and undefined resident status, they do not have a political way to influence local towns or counties where they reside.

Migration, ethnic adaptation, gender, and social class are related issues analyzed here in order to understand the present and evaluate future prospects of immigrants and old residents in the South Florida region.

The new waves of workers from the Caribbean and Central America do not compete with local workers because the labor market is sectorized by ethnicity. Instead of constituting an economic burden for Florida, Mayans and other poor immigrants are not only paying their way but making positive contributions to the region.

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Since the early eighties when a succession of military dictators killed as many as 10,000 Mayans each year, a trickle of Guatemalans<sup>1</sup> has been seeking asylum in the U.S. and an significant group have settled in Indiantown, West Palm Beach, Lake Worth, Lantana, Boyton Beach and other places of the Florida "Treasure Coast", as well as inland in Immokalee, South Florida (See Fig 1-5 and 1-6).

In Indiantown, a community of around 8,000 inhabitants, six ethnic groups are present. The traditional antagonism between blacks and whites is amplified by the presence of Chicanos, Mexicans, Haitians, and, during the last 10 years, Mayans and other Guatemalans. At least six languages are spoken, including English, Spanish, French-Creole, and the Mayan languages--K'ánjobal, Mam, and K'iché. Indiantown is part of a very complex international chain, but it also is an unincorporated town of a southern county. It is a town with a neighborhood mentality.

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<sup>1</sup> From 1982 to 1986 almost all of the Guatemalans coming to Indiantown and West Palm Beach were Mayan native Americans from Huehuetenango department. After 1986 the flow of *ladinos* (mestizo Guatemalans, see glossary) has increased.

Several economic and political process force immigrants out of their countries who come to Florida during the eighties and continue to do so in the nineties: the continued violence and economic situation in Guatemala, the economic and political situation in Mexico, the political chaos of Haiti, join with the elderly retirees coming to the "Treasure Coast" of Florida. Nevertheless, in some aspects the same processes that are at work in Guatemala and Mexico also are at work in this county, in terms of the need for a cheap labor force for the citrus industry, golf courses, and many other activities.

Since 1982 when the first Mayans arrived at Indiantown, many whites have changed their position from one of sympathy, paternalism, and economic exploitation of the Mayans toward one of irritation and open disgust. Some Mayans are buying houses in the town and some whites are giving up and leaving. They do not want to raise their children or spend their last years in the presence of people who do not behave in the standard American way and whom they do not even understand.

Blacks also have changed their position toward Mayans. Five years ago they blamed the Guatemalans for taking the support that the federal and states agencies should have been giving to them, as Americans. Now, they do not care too much about it. On the other hand, many of the attacks

and crimes against Mayans are perpetrated by blacks in Indiantown and West Palm Beach.

In addition, some Mexicans are also angry with the Guatemalans. But they are angry with themselves too, because they realize that someday the newcomers will lead the Latin community in Indiantown. They perceive that the Mayans are more organized and use different strategies for survival.

### In Purgatory

The Guatemalans immigrants are not completely legal, but not entirely illegal either. Another category, semi-legal, should be used for them. Since they apply for refugee status and only an insignificant percentage of the petitions are granted, they have just a few months or years to work in the United States. A few of them emerge from that Purgatory with a green card, many delay circumstances as much as possible, and many also go back to their homeland. In the meantime, they are semi-legal. This semi-legality is flexible and changes over time according to the economic and political climate of the government and the groups in power in the United States.

An informal sector is not exclusively found in the Third World. Traditionally, farm work has been a place where bad wages, avoiding the law, and other similar conditions make this an informal sector. The Mayans and



other immigrants participate in this sector. They do not have medical insurance, social security, or unemployment coverage. The system used through crew leaders and other intermediaries is a way of informalizing this, and is a clear example of how the informal sector is growing in the United States, especially in low-paying jobs. And as long as they move out of farm work, those activities become informalized too.

Contrary to what is said in the media and even by some academics, the immigrants are paying themselves for the social reproduction of labor<sup>2</sup>. Mayans in Indiantown, working an average of 7.7 months a year, have to save money for the time they are not working and, as the data of this dissertation shows, upon arrival, the immigrants wait twenty eight days on average before they are able to find a job. The costs of this wait for work is paid by social networks based on kinship, friendship, and homeland ties. At least in this case, it is not true that the state is paying for and subsidizing the immigrants. The "social reproduction" work is paid for the workers by themselves.

Mayans are not predominantly farm workers however. Although most of them start this way, as soon as possible

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<sup>2</sup> Social reproduction of labor referred to in this text means that the labor force maintains and recruits from within its own resources. In order to be able to be ready for work, the workers have to maintain themselves, eating, sleeping and fulfilling their basic needs. At the time they are not working, no one or agency covers their costs.

they move out of it. And although they are poor and uneducated in a formal sense, most are not being trapped in the whirlpool of farm work. Currently, less than half of them are working in agriculture and in West Palm Beach, only one in three works in agriculture. They have diversified to construction, golf courses, landscaping, and other activities.

One of the strongest images of the Mayans is that of the manual worker. The people discussed in this text are permitted to stay in the United States because they work very hard, and others understand their value and see them in that light.

The Mayans are not Hispanic and they are not *latinos*. They are Mayans who have an ancient culture. Although the first Guatemalans to come were Mayan Indians, they also opened the door for others to come and now many Guatemalans coming are spanish speaking *ladinos* (see glossary). This is an example of how labels like "Hispanic" or "latino" are more of a political stereotype to target minorities rather than an adequate way of addressing the common traits as well as the diversity of people coming to the United States from "Latin America."

Organizations play a large role in the integration of Mayans in the region. These are not political organizations; they could not be, since most Mayans are not legal residents of the United States and Indiantown is not

incorporated. During the last five years several Guatemalan organizations have been created, and spread from Indiantown to Stuart and West Palm Beach. Their activities also have diversified from immigration issues to sports, health, and art. Their differences, criticisms, and the controversy that now is common among them is a necessary step in the growth and spread of the organizations. On the important issues such as immigration policies however, they come together.

Spatially, the Purgatory is between the Boiling Pot, Indiantown, and the Inner City, West Palm Beach. On the other hand, Indiantown is not a community, at least not in the sense that it used to be from the fifties to the eighties. As Zora Neale (see narratives in this chapter) says, people no longer know who their neighbors are, and don't even understand what they are saying. A social bomb had exploded, and now the neighborhoods are multiethnic. Social stereotypes and prejudice are still the predominant way each group sees the others. But Mayans do not behave in the ways other groups, like whites and Chicanos, expect them to. What they are doing is the subject of this research.

### Text and Context

In anthropology, the issues of scale and frame<sup>3</sup> have

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<sup>3</sup> Scale and size are two interrelated terms. Anthropologists have traditionally worked in small worlds. The frame refers to national and international

been a theoretical and methodological problem in the center of many discussions in understanding the lives and social processes of the people anthropologists decide to study. This dissertation addresses that issue. It is central to the questions and answers that are opened and closed continuously in this document. It is central because, as it has been said before from a broader, international perspective, it is possible to understand what is going on in South Florida with the labor forces that are drawn from Caribbean and Latin American countries. It is not only that what has happened in Mexico and Guatemala affects life in Indiantown and Palm Beach County, but the economic health and political leadership of the United States are related to the dictatorships and economic situations in those countries. And, of course, what immigrants are now doing here affects the towns and life in their home countries. But, on the other hand, what it is happening in Indiantown is seen and managed in local terms.

Relating the case study to the frame and to the main issues has antecedents in anthropology. It is presented in a broad sense by Eric Wolf (1982) and is the driving force in the so-called "political economy" school of urbanization. Examples of this perspective are the economic works of Frank and Laclau (1973 ). In the 1980s and 90s, some sociologists

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issues or processes that affect the text, the small world we are studying.

and anthropologists like Portes (1981) and Safa (1987) also developed a political economic perspective.

One of the problems with broad approaches like political economy is the conceptualization of intermediate socio-political units. In the case of Indiantown, these intermediate political units are Martin and Palm Beach counties. Also of great importance are the intermediate social units built by the immigrants, such as the networks that work in the mentioned counties, but also link Indiantown to Immokalee, Homestead, Miami, California and to the north of the country and back to Guatemala. Falling between legality and illegality, with ambiguity between the refugee and economic status of immigration, with a question of preservation, integration, or adaptation of their cultural background, and with uncertainty as to where they will finally settle, Mayans are currently living in a special kind of Purgatory.

### The Research

I choose to do a study on the United States rather than as many of other Latin American students in the United States who do the research on our own countries. For me this last position is a vestige of colonialism in which all the information has to come to the centers of power, establishing a vertical relationship between center and periphery. Although I know I am not breaking that

relationship I find it useful that researchers from "Third World" countries provide insights in a cross cultural way about the "First World."

For me, ethnography should be the core of any anthropological study that pretends to show processes as complex as international migration and life of people in towns and cities of southern counties in the United States. In this regard, I also believe that good ethnography should contain at least one third of things the researcher actually saw, not something somebody else told him/her in an interview or questionnaire, or in reading. I consider myself very lucky because I was able to watch and participate in significative events in Indiantown and West Palm Beach. I was there for some yearly holidays and celebrations, such as the 4th of July, San Miguel, The Virgin of Guadalupe and Easter (see figures P-7, P-10, P-11, P-12, p-14). I also had many meaningful experiences, like going to the *migra* (I.N.S. office, see glossary) in Okkechobee, Tampa, and Riviera Beach with the immigrants, being their translator. Or going to the courthouse in Stuart with Jesús Mateo (a fictitious name, see his story in next section), to ask for legal assistance (which was subsequently denied) when he had to represent himself in the case. I also watched when the police later chased and handcuffed him after illegally entering the house of a Mayan family.

From 1988 I witnessed and participated also in some special events. I remember that the daughter of one of the main families of Indiantown was kidnapped by the Guatemalan army while visiting her family in Huehuetenango in 1988 (see Appendix B). Her family wanted to keep it as quiet as they could, but *Father Frank*, a catholic priest chose to protests loudly through the media and the prompt release of the girl in Guatemala proved him right.

Two of the most important events that I saw were the *Posadas* event (see Appendix B) of 1988 and the Gazebo strike of 1993 (see Chapter Five). The first, a collective protest against the I.N.S. but made in the form of the religious celebration of the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph looking for shelter on the night of the birth of Jesus Christ, was an event of survival and rebirth that put together many issues in the life of the immigrants, including the importance of work, the lack of housing and shelter for the people. It also pointed out the duality that the immigrants are wanted as workers but not as citizens, and that it would be better if they evaporated as soon as they finished their work. The Gazebo strike of 1993 was a protest against discriminatory practices in one of the main landscaping firms of the region.

A dramatic event was the accident of 1993. It happened at the commemoration of another accident, two years before, when seven workers that were traveling to the sugar cane

fields were killed. I did my first trip in ambulance, to the Martin Memorial Hospital in Stuart, accompanying the wife of one of my best friends in Indiantown, who was injured in the accident. Other events comprises Weddings Baptisms, individual and collective visits of anthropologists and other outsiders. One special celebration was the "open house" of Mario's family and Lili's birthday. At the gathering, in order to give good luck to the house the family has just acquired, attended many of the leaders of the different ethnic organizations of Indiantown and West Palm Beach. It was also significative because Lili, the second child of the family has already finished and approved kindergarten cycle at the school. Afterwards, looking to the pictures of the party was that I realized I have more pictures of Mario's family than of my own children!

I think the meaning of these pieces of life I have been so fortunate to share with Mayans and other immigrants, is the completion of the ethnographer's cycle; to go to another culture, to be there, to come back and to tell the story in universal understandable terms. But in the meantime it has enriched my life and my understanding of human beings.

Besides direct observation and participation, the field research included three surveys. The first was done in Indiantown the Summer of 1988 when I was co-researcher of the project Immigration, Ethnicity and Work in Indiantown, Florida with Dr. Allan Burns and Jerónimo Camposeco for the



Labor Department of the United States, Bureau of International Labor Affairs. The second was done in Indiantown between December 1988 and April 1989 with funds provided by Dr. Allan Burns and the University of Florida Foundation, through Dr. Paul Doughty. And the third one was done in 1993, from April to June for the project Immigrant Adjustment and Interethnic Relations in South Florida, with the support of National Science Foundation, for Drs. Allan Burns and David Griffith, in Indiantown and West Palm Beach. In the three cases, samples were selected for interviews. The survey of 1989 was made in the context of Aguirre's study of Seasonal Agricultural Services workers (S.A.S.), as described in Chapter Five.

Diary and field notes were also recorded, analyzed, classified and included in the dissertation. In general the text represents direct observation and participation, three surveys, field notes and diary, and many recorded interviews. Coming back from Colombia, in 1993 one of my bags was stolen at the Miami airport and I lost fifty --almost all-- of the tapes with the interviews I have made in 1988 and 1989. But I was able to do most of them again. That was one of the moments not only most difficult of the research, but that I congratulated myself for having done it in South Florida, and not in Colombia. As much as possible I try to use the direct voice and opinions of the people in presenting cases.

Finally, I need to say that this text is written not only from the head but also from the heart. I lived with the immigrants in several places in Indiantown and West Palm Beach in a five years span, and established what I expect to be life long friendships. I almost felt like one of them, but when one of my roommates heard me saying so, he added: "Yes, except for one thing. You do not have to wake up 4:30 in the morning and go to work in the fields."

### The People

Here is some of the people from Indiantown and West Palm Beach I worked and lived with. Some of them I interviewed in 1988 or 1989 and then again in 1993. Whites, blacks, Chicanos, Mexicans and Guatemalans are included with different backgrounds in regards of age, gender, education, work activities, and different experiences. In Chapter Three, the opinions of some of them about the main problems, inter-ethnic relations and other issues of Indiantown and West Palm Beach are underscored.

Mario Pérez<sup>4</sup> has been in the United States for the last 10 years. At 36, he has worked in many different jobs from picking vegetables to landscaping, and in the advocacy

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<sup>4</sup> Except the narrative of Casimira Morales, derived from Porro (1993), and personal files of Jerónimo Camposeco, the stories of this chapter are developed from my research data in Indiantown in 1988, 1989, and 1993. All personal names are fictitious.

of the Mayan people through ethnic and business organizations. The first time he came to California he learned many things in order to be able to work in this country. But he also suffered being without his wife and daughter, so he went back to Guatemala and returned with his family. In the meantime another daughter was born. This time, crossing the border was very difficult, and one of the children almost died in the desert. Mario and his family headed to South Florida, where a growing population of Mayans were settled in Martin and Palm Beach Counties. Mario decided to stay in Indiantown, where he found some friends from childhood.

Before he went from California back to Guatemala, Mario had lived in the Blue and White Camps (work campaments where immigrants live, specially upon arrival, see Chapter Four, Figures 4-1, 4-3, and Figure 1-7), and then with a group of countrymen from his hometown. Since his return to the United States six years ago, Mario has moved three times. Besides providing a place to live for his own family, which now includes his wife and three daughters, he always has rented rooms to countrymen and has had his and his wife relatives from California and Guatemala visiting.

As an immigrant, Mario has accomplished two important things. A few years ago, he, his wife, and his brother-in-law were able to obtain green cards. It was difficult to do because the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) did

not want to accept their papers, arguing that they were fake. But now they can fly back and forth to their homeland, remembering that episode in the desert as a matter of the past. But hardship is a reality for many people who are coming now and for the majority who do not have green cards.

Last year Mario and his family were able to buy a house. Although the number is increasing, only a few of the Mayans are owners of houses or land. Every time Mario does something for which he needs money, he believes that he has the support of his relatives, friends, and countrymen. His daughters attend school and are surpassing him and his wife very rapidly in learning English. Now that he knows his family is in this country permanently, he is thinking about the things he needs to do for the future.

Casimira Morales is married, but for many years she has not known where her husband is. Her daughter left the village with some neighbors and went to Mexico in 1982 when she was 12 years old, running for her life. "I have never heard from her again. I am not sure if she is alive or dead, and I don't know where she is if she is alive." Then she decided to leave her village and country because "I could be killed by either side [the army or the guerrillas]

for their perception that I support the other side. I decided to seek refuge outside the country."<sup>5</sup>

She made the journey with a coyote (see glossary), who charged her \$500 for the trip from Guatemala to Mexico and then across the border to the U.S. She paid him in two years. Casimira applied for political asylum and, although it took four years, in 1989 hers became one of the very few cases in which it was granted. Now she is legally a refugee and able to stay and work in Indiantown (Porro 1993: 10).

Casimira lived in a typical cramped and crowded place where Mayans live upon their arrival at Indiantown--first in the Blue Camp for a month, then in the Yellow Camp for one year, and in trailers for two and one-half years. Currently she shares a small house with three others (Porro 1993: 14). Casimira started working by picking vegetables. Then she moved to work as an aide for one of the members of the Holy Cross Center of Indiantown, assisting her in the field work, as an interpreter between Kanjobal and Spanish. She started earning \$3.35 per hour in the fields and at the Holy Cross Center and Cooperative, and now she earns \$4.35 per hour (Porro 1993: 18). At the cooperative she used to make clothes, but for the past three years she has been working in a rose nursery. Casimira does not have medical insurance despite the fact that the pesticides give her painful

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<sup>5</sup> Statement of Casimira for the I.N.S. personal files of Jerónimo Camposeco.

headaches and itchy skin. But still she considers this a good job because she does not have to work in the fields under the sun (Porro 1993: 21).

Jesús Mateo spent the last six months of 1993 in jail in Stuart. It was the third time he had been caught driving under influence (DUI) of alcohol, and he had no license for driving because it was pending as consequence of the second DUI. The police illegally chased into the house of one of his friends in Indiantown and arrested him.

Although he already was serving time in jail on the weekends, he was not able to control himself when he started drinking. He thinks many of his problems started when his mother remarried after they arrived in Indiantown around 10 years ago. He was 12 years old at the time.

His relationship with his mother has not been good since that time, although she has supported him as much as she could. When he was in jail, he remembered what his friend Pedro had told him about tough times. Upon arrival from Guatemala, Pedro was chased by immigration officers into the house of a friend who was supporting him before he was able to find a job. The chase into the house was illegal, but since he had no documents and had not yet been able to apply for asylum, he was arrested and had to spend six months at the INS center for detention in South Florida, near Miami. Later on, the American Friends Service

Committee, a nonprofit organization with lawyers, took an interest in his case and Pedro was freed.

Mary Smith, a white woman, had been in contact with the refugees (as they were considered at that time) practically since the first ones arrived in 1982. She taught English to the Mayans, and she served as a translator at the post office, the bank, and similar places. At the *San Miguel Fiesta* about six years ago, she was recognized as one of the people who had helped and supported the Mayans. Other distinguished guests were a priest and a nun from the Holy Cross Center, two lawyers who had been representing them, and one professor from the Anthropology Department of the University of Florida. Mary even crowned the "Princess of Work" who, along with two other "princesses" and the "queen" of the festival, was a symbol of the strength and beauty of the immigrants.

At that time, her perspective of the situation in a town with so many refugees, who were considered transitory, was moderately optimistic. She believed that they would integrate in the same ways other Hispanic groups, especially the Mexicans, had done. By 1993 she had a completely different vision. In a few words, what she recognizes now is that the Mayans are unique--different from Hispanic groups--and that in many ways they fit into the system of providing labor but not into the American way of life.

Mary says she understands prejudice and discrimination. She came from a community in northern Pennsylvania with ethnic antagonism between the Irish and German Catholics. Her parents did not allow her to have a German boyfriend. She also remembers that violence in Indiantown is not new. During the 1960s, Booker Park had people being shot every night. A few years later the schools were integrated, and Hispanics started to buy houses.

Another important issue for her is the energy plant. It started in the late 1970s or early 1980s, and it was a financial boost to Indiantown. In 1982 the Guatemalans started to come, and the tensions began to grow. From 1986 to 1989 there were bad times in the community. Mary's husband, who is in construction, built no houses for three years because of bad publicity about the immigrants. It was terrible. She feels that this time is behind them. The second part of the plant is built now. Financially, she is more optimistic now.

She remembers that the meetings of 1988 were an effort to ease the tensions. This was a time of great controversy because of the debate in the newspapers and on radio and television about the terrible housing conditions for the Guatemalans. The meetings attracted tourists to the Mayan culture. On the other hand, Mary says it is not nice when you have to live with them, although she really lives in the upper-class neighborhood.



Sean O' Brian is in his late 20s and has lived all his life in Indiantown except for when he went to college at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He has an important position in the community as the owner of one of the main companies in town and also as a civic leader. He lives in an exclusively white<sup>6</sup> neighborhood. Sean expresses an optimistic view of what has happened in Indiantown. He says that 10 years ago, tensions that now are directed toward Guatemalans were aimed at the Mexicans. He also says that the situation is better now that most of the antagonism is over.

He recalls his experiences attending elementary and middle schools in Jupiter, studying with a Mexican from Indiantown. The boy was one of seven siblings, and Sean remembers that he was rather quiet. But he now realizes that it would be difficult if you were the only "different" student in a small private school.

Susan Dougherty is a middle-class, semi-retired woman. She has been in Indiantown interacting with the immigrants as a health professional while living with her husband in

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<sup>6</sup> I prefer to use the term *white* rather than *anglo* or another term, because this is the way it is used for all the people in Indiantown and Palm Beach County. They also freely use the term *black* for people that now are called Afro-Americans. Blacks call Mayans and other people from Guatemala *the guales*. Mayans call anglos or whites *bolillos*, taking the word from Mexicans who have been using the term (meaning "white bread") for many years. They also refer to Haitians and blacks as *moyos* (see glossary for these terms).

one of the multiethnic neighborhoods. She and her husband are thinking of leaving town.

Her narrative is a fresh and candid impression. They came here 20 years ago. The community was made up basically of whites, with some blacks and Mexicans. In 1982 the Guatemalans started to arrive. Somebody had brought the first Guatemalans to Jupiter, and soon after that they began to come to Indiantown. She says it is rumored that the church brought the Guatemalans here. There was a great cultural shock, not only for whites but also for the Guatemalans, because they were "primitive" people from the mountains and not from Guatemala City.

She and her husband are getting overwhelmed. They have talked to a real state agent because they are thinking of going to Okeechobee. Prices of homes are between \$75,000 and \$95,000. However, they don't have the money.

She also is irritated because she lost her hospitalization insurance. And while an operation that she needs costs \$60,000 and there is no help for her, she believes the immigrants are getting help.

Her parents are from Germany. That is why she understands it is easy to stereotype people and believe one's own prejudices. But the situation does not prevent Susan from admiring the Guatemalan women. She also admires their families and their strength. "I do not have the guts

to do that traveling. Women have such quiet dignity. I admire them for what they have done."

Bessie White states that she has been in Indiantown for 37 years. She says that she has come a long way. Her family came from New York City when she was eight or nine years old. Back in those times they did not have anything. It was 1959 or 1960.

Booker Park already was the black neighborhood. People were seasonal workers. She got along well with the Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. All of the people worked in tomatoes, beans, strawberries--and blacks were working with them. Over the years it has changed, but some blacks are still working in fields. Back then, the citrus industry was growing rapidly. People worked 10 hours a day, five days a week. Mexicans started coming and buying homes. They were wetbacks (see glossary). Many of them were illegal at the time, but some bought houses.

Bessie got married in 1966 at the age of 16. Both before and after her marriage she worked in the fields, earning \$15 a week, \$58 a month, for many years. When a program was started to help immigrant workers buy houses, she got one of these houses in 1970. Sixteen houses were built in the beginning--nice, beautiful houses. It was Zora who got a loan from the county to buy the land. The nationality of the buyers did not matter, and the program

was not only for immigrants but also for low-income families.

Zora Neal is a leader of the black community in Indiantown, but she is recognized and admired by all the other ethnic groups and organizations. She recalls that until the late 1960s, the field work was done by blacks, not by "alien" groups. Then came social programs to re-train the blacks for other jobs, and great influxes of Mexican-Americans, Haitians, Jamaicans, and Guatemalans came to work in the fields. She can name all the vegetables they produced and harvested, and also the flowers.

Zora clarifies that Indiantown is a community now, but it is not the one where her children grew up in the fifties and sixties. At that time it was a community where everybody knew one another. Now they do not know other people living on the same street. Many times, other people are seen only at church or possibly at sports events.

Although Zora no longer lives in town, she says that she understands what it means to live in a place where one is not really accepted. Employers want to see people at work, but not after work. That's the mentality. Blacks have been in the same situation.

Two of Zora's children are living in Central America, one working with the government and the other studying there. She believes that she and her family are doing well because they give to their children what they received from

her parents. Her father raised 13 children; besides his own 10, he adopted two foster children and one nephew. Everyday all the children came to him to talk about their problems and situations and to ask for advice for their homework. Also, they had somebody to read for the family.

One aspiration of the family is for everyone to finish high school, and it is even better if they can go to college. Those who excel should give a hand to the others and help them to improve themselves, so it won't be that someone is up and the others are down.

In the 1960s, Eucario Bermúdez drank beer with the policeman who brought him back from Texas to the Mexico border. They became acquaintances and even friends. He says that over several years he crossed the border, back and forth, at least 50 times. Although Eucario does not speak English fluently, in some ways he represents the American Dream. Coming *mojado* (see glossary, wetback), he started enterprises and went broke three times. He believes that his pride and stubbornness are the traits that have kept him alive and optimistic but at the same time have been the cause of his downfalls. He had a very good business collecting and selling cow manure as fertilizer, but when the farmers raised their prices he felt it was unfair and he decided to go out of business. He moved with his wife Dolores to Indiantown at the beginning of the 1970s. They had to sell their house in California, and after all these

years in the United States, he thinks now he belongs to both worlds.

Oscar García is a young leader of the Guatemalan community in West Palm Beach. For him, crossing the border three years ago was not so hard because in Mexico he was able to pass like a countryman. In Guatemala and Mexico he would be considered a *ladino* (see glossary).

However, Oscar had a rough time when he had to work first in labor (see glossary) and then in landscaping and taking care of a lake. He was not used to physical work in Guatemala. In his town, he was a full-time student, first in elementary and high school and then one year in college.

### The Text

The second chapter entitled "On the Move. The First Purgatory: The Immigration Process and the Semi-Legality," addresses the international political and economic forces shaping the migration and, the need for cheap labor in agriculture and other industries.

The second part of this frame is the legal system in the United States that covers the immigration issue, how it is managed through legislation, and immigration policy--the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1991. Most of the immigrants are semi-legal; this is one of the most interesting aspects of the informal economy. An informal

economy is not only for the Third World. Traditionally, the labor force of immigrants has been managed through the legal/illegal status. The IRCA and the mandatory studies that must be done at federal level is a confirmation of this issue.

Other important part of the legal system are the regulations and plans of development at the county and regional levels. They do not take into consideration the differences among the Treasure Coast and the inner cities in the West Palm Beach area and the depressed areas of Martin County. The regulations constitute a barrier to building new neighborhoods and houses and have ended up being a companion of the exploitation of immigrants by house owners and lawyers.

The third chapter is "Between the Boiling Pot and the Inner City." It addresses the challenges that newcomers must face and the changes that local blacks and white Americans are facing because of the immigration process. Mayans are the most conspicuous part of this boiling pot. The fact that they are Indians make it more desirable to civilize them and in general change them to fit into the standard American way of life. As it does not work, for many it reinforces the stereotypes and prejudices.

Many Whites want to change the Mayans' behavior, but after several years they are giving up and don't want to live with them. Mayans are not confined in a neighborhood

like blacks and Haitians; neither are they immersed as much in an anesthetic behavior as are blacks, and that's what make them so unpredictable for whites, but also for other minority groups.

In this chapter is presented the view from whites, blacks, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, as well as the handling by the press of the situation in Indiantown and West Palm Beach. It includes how the anthropologists have been studying them, following academic impulses. Also, the differences between Indiantown (the boiling pot) and West Palm Beach (the inner city) are shown from the points of view of the organizations and daily life.

The fourth chapter is "Making It Through the System, Education and Housing." For the present generation of immigrant workers it soon became evident that the way to improve was not going to be education but rather work and cultural strategies. Also for some leaders and members of the town that have patronized them through education, this was clear. But education is the arena where many of the generational changes of migrants can be seen, and, to the outsiders, the way the Maya still can be changed--perhaps not the present but the next generation.

As Zora Neal (see *The People*, in this introduction) says, Maya and any other immigrants are wanted as workers but not as neighbors. Housing is the number one problem in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, being an arena where the



incongruence between rules, plans, and reality appear most evident. As Mayans are buying houses, some whites are leaving town. By being legal or semi-legal and buying houses, living in crowded conditions and saving money, they are making it through the system; however, the ethnic antagonism has not diminished.

"Making It Through the System, Work, The Main Issue in Purgatory," is the fifth chapter. Work is the activity that permits immigrants to stay in the country legally, illegally, or semi-legally. Almost all of these immigrants started as farm workers. At the beginning of this study, more than half of the Maya could be considered farm workers, but now only around one-third of them work in agriculture.

Mayans improve, in their own terms, by being good, hard workers and through cultural strategies, including diversification. Now they do different kinds of work: conservation of lakes, agriculture, golf, construction, furniture building, banking, teaching school, and in agencies of remittances to Guatemala and Central America.

Through work they also have spread over the area. Indiantown, Palm Beach Gardens, Lake Worth, Lantana, and other places are now the nodes of the net they have built. But the way they have moved also tells us about differences among them in terms of community orientation, goals, preferences between good jobs, staying with friends, and many other related decisions they make.

Mayas are considered to be quiet, good workers. This is the reason why owners and crew leaders hold them in such high esteem. Furthermore, most of them have not had any former participation in political protests except the Posadas of 1988, as a protest against INS policies and the way they are wanted as workers but not as whole human beings. The strike that took place in 1993 in one of the biggest landscaping firms also confirms that they will stand up for their rights.

But there is more about the pride of being hard good workers--what is really behind that pride. It is not only a moral, ethical issue of being decent people rather than criminals. Behind that there is a strategy, a collective although not always conscious planning.

The sixth chapter is "Future and Possibilities" The orientation and general direction of the process of acculturation occurring in Martin and Palm Beach Counties is underscored in that chapter. Included is the vision of the future according to the different ethnic and class groups: whites, blacks, Mexican-Americans, Mexicans, Maya. The ethnographic insights of how the different ethnic groups perceive that the others are going to do and what the future for the whole town and region will be gives a rich picture of how are they doing now. Experiencing class differences and sharing the place with immigrants are meaningful; it is

not the same to just talk about the situation but rather to share the street with them.

The most conspicuous issue of what is going on now and what it is going to be like in the future is the Maya Phoenix. They lost everything, but then they regain everything through reconstruction, traditions, and current issues. The path of reconstruction is plagued with many shortcomings. Some of them are internal antagonisms and lack of experience in U.S. system. The fluorescence of ethnic organizations for the Maya in Indiantown and West Palm Beach and rivalry among them is an indication of the phenomena. But the Maya Phoenix has grown bigger and now is spread over Martin and Palm Beach Counties, and in Immokalee. And there is a Maya network of employment and places to live stretching from Florida to Texas and Los Angeles and other places in California. Other shortcomings are the product of the inadequacy of the scope. The solutions to the problems created by the immigration process are initiated at the local or regional levels.

"In Purgatory" is the seventh and final chapter of the dissertation. As a conclusion, the main points of the dissertation and of the purgatory the immigrants have to endure are summarized and underscored . Figures 1-1 to 1-7 at the end of this introduction are the maps of the dissertation.

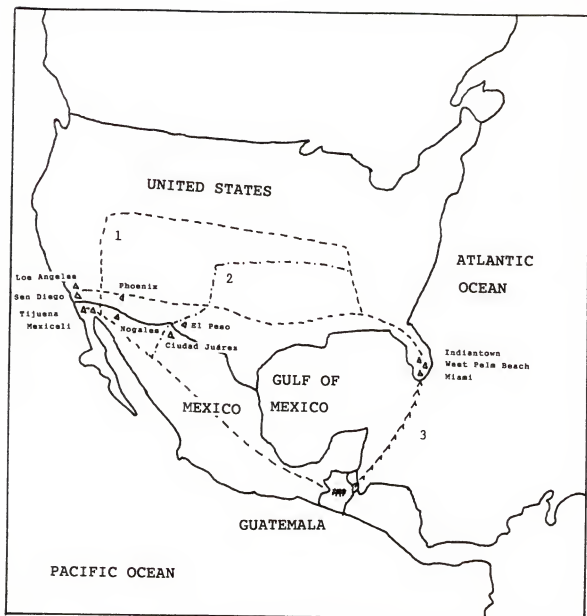


FIGURE 1-1  
MAIN ROUTES FROM GUATEMALA TO THE UNITED STATES

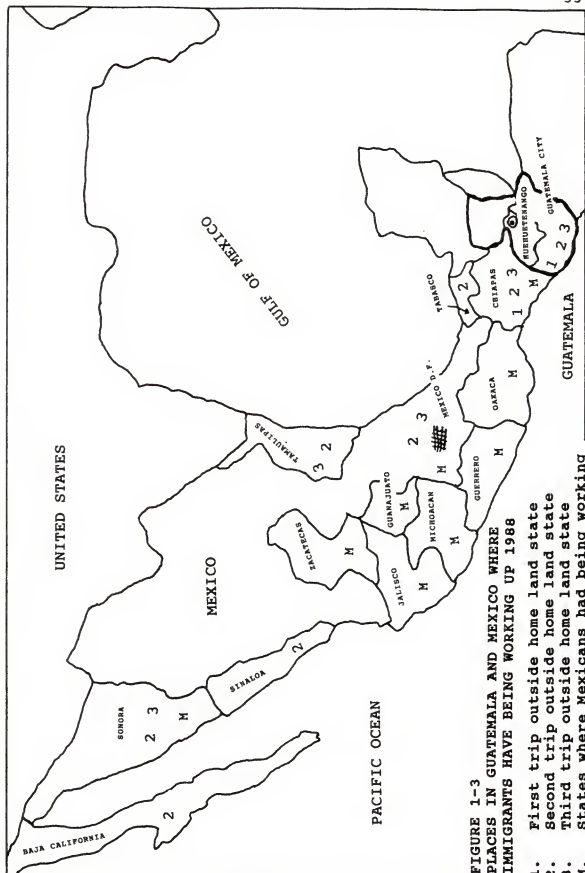
1. Coming through the desert, crossing illegally by foot or car, 1982 - present, most used route.
2. Coming through the river as wetbacks, illegally crossing swimming or by foot, 1982 - present.
3. Coming by plane, with green card, after 1988.

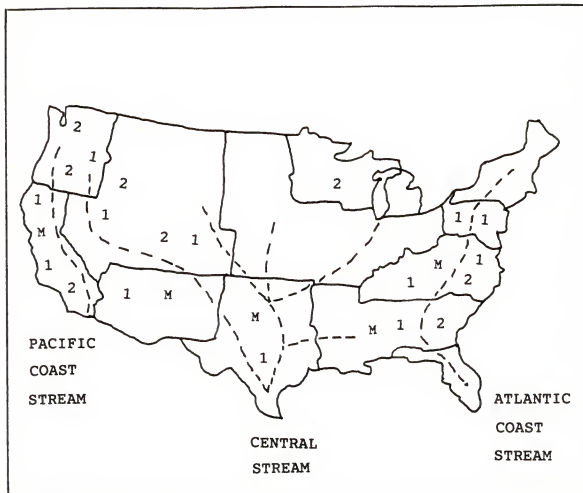
76-4  
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**FIGURE 1-2**  
**STATES OF ORIGIN OF GUATEMALANS**

1. Places of origin of Guatemalans coming up 1986
2. Places of origin of Guatemalans coming after 1986

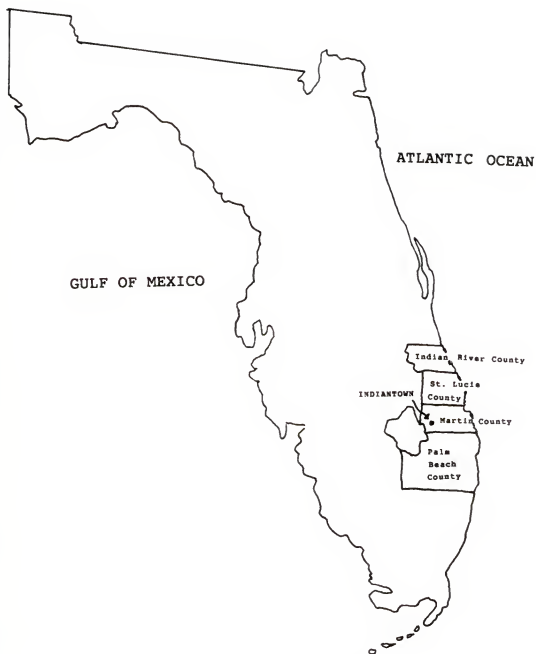




**FIGURE 1-4**  
**AGRICULTURAL REGIONS IN UNITED STATES WHERE IMMIGRANTS WERE WORKING**

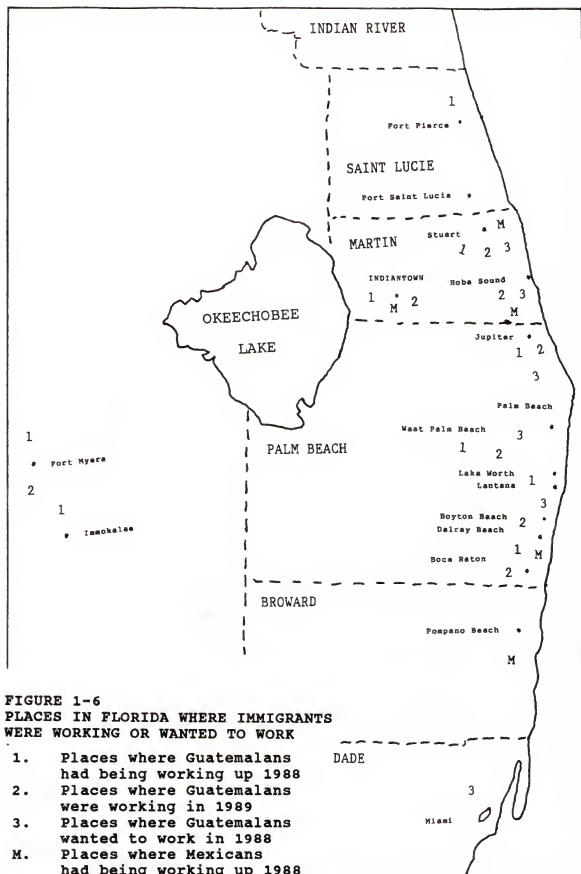
1. Agricultural regions where Guatemalans had being working up 1988.
2. Agricultural regions where Guatemalans were working between April 1988 and April 1989.
3. Agricultural regions where Mexicans had being working up 1988.

**Source:** Stream configurations as in Mohl (1981)  
 Agricultural regions as in United States  
 Department of Labor (1991)



**FIGURE 1-5**  
**THE TREASURE COAST REGION OF FLORIDA**





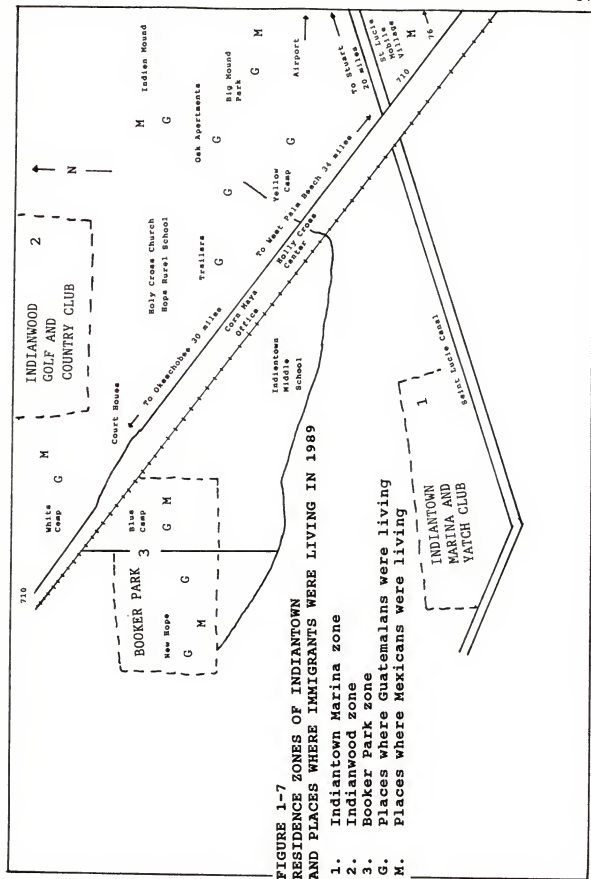


FIGURE 1-7  
RESIDENCE ZONES OF INDIANTOWN  
AND PLACES WHERE IMMIGRANTS WERE LIVING IN 1989

1. Indian Town Marina zone
  2. Indianwood zone
  3. Booker Park zone
- G. Places where Guatemalans were living  
M. Places where Mexicans were living

CHAPTER TWO  
ON THE MOVE. THE FIRST PURGATORY:  
THE IMMIGRATION PROCESS AND THE SEMI-LEGALITY

Mayans are the most conspicuous peak of the several waves of immigrants that have arrived in Indiantown and South Florida during the past 15 years. Now, they are a part of the mainstream of immigrants that have made this country. As Oscar Handlin said, "Once I thought to write a history of the immigrants in America. Then I discovered that the immigrants were American history" (Handlin 1951, The Uprooted, In: Pozzeta 1991: v).

They also are imbedded in several international processes that affect the lives of everyone in the First and Third Worlds.

The Context, the Decentralization of Capitalism.  
Deindustrialization and Informalization

Although the internationalization of capitalist development has been happening for nearly five centuries, the global accumulation of capital formerly was based on trade. Now, with the offshore multinational corporations, the capital is also being valorized internationally and the surplus value obtained cross-culturally.

This horizontal organization of production across national boundaries is based on the fragmentation, simplification, standardization, and homogenization of the labor process to facilitate the international valorization of capital by incorporating the unskilled labor force of other nations to it. Currently, despite their cultural differences, the direct factory workers in the assembly line of a particular product do the same activities every day during their working hours, no matter in what country the industries are located.

Thus, in a broad perspective, it is possible to see that the new international division of labor is now making capital and labor more mobile. As a consequence, the process of importation of labor, an old trait for the United States, is now common in all of the industrialized nations of the First World, which are no longer importing only primary products from the developing countries but also laboring hands, as well as exporting capital to the Third World countries. The migration process thus enables the "host" society to avoid a confrontation with the underlying unequal nature of the social system.

In later stages of capitalist development at the center, there is a paradoxical shortage of workers for low-level jobs. Industrial society always has tended to generate a set of jobs unacceptable to the native born, and in the U.S. these have been filled first by European

immigrants, then by black labor from the South, and more lately by rural Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and Central Americans.

Very conveniently, in many cases the hands simply go home in periods when they are no longer needed, and the state and the enterprises thus entirely avoid paying the social costs of the new, flexible labor reserve in terms of social security and pensions, health and unemployment insurance, welfare provisions, and the like. Moreover, imported laborers are far less likely to organize in demand of such rights than are domestic workers.

One of the factors that most influence the attitude pro or against immigrants is the stay of economy in general and employment in particular. In the eighties, two severe recessions depressed employment in manufacturing and construction. Employment in manufacturing fell 5 percent from 1978 to 1983, and durable goods manufacturing fell 9 percent (Freedman 1985: 147).

#### Informal Economy in the First World

In regard to the informal sector in the context of Indiantown, some of the activities are done along side of formal ones, like a farm laborer who learns to drive and buys a vehicle so that he can become a subcontractor or a crew leader and recruit day laborers. Many women cook for all the workers in the household and in doing so earn

complementary monies. As noted by Burns (1988b: 32-34), women usually did the same in Guatemala, but without payment.

According to the definition used, the informal sector in South Florida could be either wide or narrow. Portes, Castells, and Benton's (1988) definition states that the informal sector is a process of acquisition of income that is not legally regulated in a social environment where similar activities are regulated. This includes activities that result in the intent to overlook or ignore existing laws and regulations. In this case, many of the activities performed by immigrants become semi-legal or illegal and therefore will fit in this pattern. Farm and agricultural workers do not have stability, nor social security or minimum wage.

There is a correlation between the decentralization of economy and the expansion of the informal sector, in the First World. However, one of the effects of Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) law is the formalization of some of the illegal immigrants. In turn, this is causing a competition among them for the nonagricultural jobs. Thus, there is an incongruence between the political process, of which one of the outputs was the mentioned immigration law, and the economic process that attracts illegal immigrants, supporting and sometimes enhancing the informal sector.

### Immigration

Why do so few immigrants come to the United States? In relative numbers, immigrants account for only 0.24% of the total population of the United States each year (600,000 out of 250,000,000) (Portes and Rumbaut 1990, Table 3). Even if we estimate that for each registered immigrant, three more not registered come, it would be less than one percent of the United States Population. Considering all of the supposed benefits and improvements in their lives, only a minuscule percentage of the total population of the major sending countries come here. In 1987, the percentage was only 0.09% for Mexico, the major sender (Portes and Rumbaut 1990, Table 3; also see Table 2 of this dissertation). Stating the question in this way, Portes and Rumbaut (1990: 9) reverse the ideology: suppose that too many immigrants come to the United States, and also that the ones who come from the Third World countries are the poor and uneducated of those places. In reality, there are many impediments to leaving the place of origin, even if the United States is one of the most open First World countries to immigrants.

The myth of the uneducated and poor immigrant does not hold in fact. The literature of several decades of social science studies (Leeds 1975, Doughty 1987) and long-time research provides enough evidence that immigrants are selected in the place of origin and also are a self-selected group. Generally, immigrants to the United States have a

higher level of education than the average in the sending countries. Neither are they the poorest according to the living standards of the places of origin.

In the past when there was a need, recruiters many times went to Mexico to find workers because the higher wages alone were not enough incentive. Some of those efforts have been the Bracero Program, that started in the Second World War, and continued in the forties and fifties to assure enough farm workers from Mexico, the H2 and H2A programs to assure Jamaican sugar cane cutters for the sugar industry, and most recently the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS), not a program but rather an account of how many farm workers would be needed after the IRCA law of 1986 that permitted immigrants to get a green card if they had worked 90 days in farm work between 1985 and 1987.

According to Portes and Rumbaut, the main motive for the decision to leave friends, relatives, and many important things at home and come to a foreign, perhaps hostile country, is the gap that is perceived between life aspirations and the means to fulfill them in the places of origin. In that regard, immigration is a consequence of the dominant influence of urban industrial Western culture in all the world, especially as portrayed through the media. As a footnote, it is interesting that this same argument is one of the strongest when considering why the youngsters in Medellín, Colombia, become *sicarios* (see glossary), through



the unbalance between the life they perceive through the media and the miserable life they have if they follow the moral and religious prescriptions.

The media, then, is playing the role the recruiters had held before in Mexico. The perception of the American way of life is the great recruiter for today's migration. But the information of how to come and the willingness to take the implied risks are possible only for a few.

Portes and Rumbaut also state that, in general, immigrants to the United States not only are better educated but also are from cities. This means that even if they have to take jobs for which they are over qualified, they soon will find better jobs and contribute their skills. Thus, the idea of an alien that becomes a burden for the welfare system or social security seems to be more a stereotype based on prejudice that is used as a political issue in times of economic recession than an accurate conclusion from fact. Most of the immigrants are self-selected also in terms of their ambition and willingness take risks and jobs that others will not because of a variety of economic and social reasons.

Mayans however do not come from large cities, nor are they the better educated of Guatemalans. In fact, most of them, especially the first waves, were peasants, with less formal education than the average of the farm workers immigrants (see Chapter Five). They are Indians and they

enter, escaping ethnic persecution, as semi-refugees. But still they do not constitute a burden for Americans. On the contrary, as I will show later in other chapters, they contribute economically and culturally to their local communities and to the country.

### Theories of Migration

It is possible to base the theories about the origins of migration, included migrant labor, in two groups. The orthodox theorists look at migration in terms of the push-pull forces and present a portrayal of the flow as a one-way escape from hunger, want, or persecution. They tend to emphasize the role of migrants as a supplement to the domestic labor force. For them, the adaptation process is a series of stages culminating in a gradual assimilation into one of the subsegments of the society. Underlying these theories is a view of society as a structure supported by value consensus and of social change as an equilibrium-restoring mechanism.

With the other theoretical approach, the expanding capitalist economy is consonant with a view of the process as part of a series of multiple displacements in space. The articulation of internal and international migrations is better understood within a framework that does not sharply separate "national" from "international" phenomena but that sees both as part of the same economic system (Portes and

Bach 1985). Immigration emerges from this analysis as an integral component of the struggle between labor and capital and as evidence that this struggle is not confined by national borders. The process entails not a gradual assimilation of migrants into the core but rather a gradual awareness of exploitation and an increasing dissatisfaction. Social change occurs as an outcome of conflict between classes and class segments. The scene of these struggles transcends regions and countries and at present encompasses the entire world.

To understand the journey of the Mayans and other immigrants into "Purgatory," however it is necessary to take note of three conditions seen as determinants of contemporary out-migration. Authors in this line of thought have consistently shown that: 1) the very poor seldom emigrate because they lack the means or the knowledge to undertake such a long-distance journey; 2) the principal causes of migration are rooted in structural contradictions in sending countries and receiving countries; and 3) once a migration flow begins, it tends to become self-sustaining through the emergence of strong social networks linking place of origin and place of destination (Portes and Bach 1985, Portes and Truelove 1987, Portes and Rumbaut 1990, Chaves 1991). Personal data and several studies on Indiantown and West Palm Beach (see specially Burns 1993), according with my point of view, are better understood, if

analyzed in the frame outlined up here. In other sections and chapters the discussion will return to them.

The Semi-Legality. Policies, Main Laws  
and Periods of Immigration

Although this is a country of immigrants, hostility and shifts of mood against immigrants are not new. A flexible and open position matches a period of need for workers, as in late eighties with the IRCA law of 1986, and, a closed, hostile position corresponds with a recession period, as in the early eighties and as currently exists, especially in the south.

Migration Eras and the 1924 National Origins Act  
(McCarran-Walter)

Between 1820 and 1980, over 49 million immigrants came to the United States. During that time, the U.S. population grew from under 10 million to 226 million (Ashabrunner and Conklin 1986: 27-28). From 1860 to 1890, immigration brought close to 10 million people to the country. Most of them came from Europe. From 1881 to 1890 alone, more than 5 million new immigrants arrived. By 1920, half of the urban population of the United States was either foreign born or second generation (Portes and Bach 1985: 29-31).

After much discussion about restriction, in the 1920s the Congress passed legislation to limit the flow of immigrants from Europe. National quotas were established

based on the ethnic make-up of the population at that time. Third World immigrants, including Latins, became the objects of hostility. Table 1 shows the flow of immigrants from Latin America from 1820 to 1930.

Table 1. Flow of Immigrants from Latin America, 1820-1920

<u>Country or Region</u>	<u>Number</u>
Mexico	755,936
West Indies (including Cuba)	428,895
Central America	43,019
South America	113,499
	-----
Total	1,341,349
(Source: Reiners 1985: 2)	

Prior to World War II, Mexicans constituted by far the largest number of Latin American immigrants. Three quarters of a million came to the U.S. before 1940. In passing the immigration restriction acts of the 1920s and 1930s, Congress exempted the Western Hemisphere from the quotas due to a Pan Americanist Movement that received support from economic interests in the Southwest who looked upon Mexicans as a source of cheap labor. However, in the 1930s, because of the Great Depression and high rates of unemployment, the federal government repatriated about 400,000 Mexicans. And by the time World War II started, the United States had severely restricted most racial and ethnic minorities' immigration from Third World nations and colonies, including Latin America.

Most of the Latin American immigration was a wage-labor flow. Men, often single, had dominated the immigration

figures. But beginning in the 1930s, women became the majority. That new gender ratio remained after the war. Some individual nations sent a male majority, but, overall, women outnumbered men in the years after 1945. Before 1945, immigrants usually were unskilled or semiskilled. This situation was reversed after that date, and also a flow of professionals began. After passage of the 1965 act, Third World countries, especially Asian and Latin American, dominated the brain drain to the United States (Portes and Bach 1985).

Post-World War II changes in immigration policies can be explained by several factors, including growing ethnic, religious, and racial toleration due to the civil rights and other movements, and the need for setting a new policy with Third World countries. The general economy growth, especially between the middle forties and the seventies, eased the anxieties that immigrants would take jobs from natives, at least for the time being.

#### The Immigration Act of 1965

This law set quotas of 170,000 annually for immigrants from Europe, Asia, and Africa, and 120,000 for the Americas. No nation was to send more than 20,000 each year. It also set rules for preferential treatment of professional and specially-trained persons. However, over seven million persons emigrated legally and illegally to the United States

from 1960 to the early eighties, from all over the world (Reiners 1985: 242). Reflecting the worry of the public, in 1978 the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy was established. The introduction in 1981 of the Simpson-Mazzoli bill attested to an even greater concern about migration.

Table 2. Latin American Immigration to the United States in sample years, 1965-1979

Region/country	1965	1970	1975	1979
<b>Mexico and the Caribbean</b>				
Mexico	88,402	115,250	139,360	121,801
Cuba	37,969	44,669	62,205	52,096
Dominican Rep.	19,760	16,334	25,955	15,585
Haiti	9,504	10,807	14,066	17,519
Jamaica	3,609	6,932	5,145	6,433
Trin. & Tobago	1,837	15,033	11,076	19,714
Others	756	7,350	5,982	5,225
Central America	14,967	14,125	14,931	5,229
South America	12,423	9,443	9,696	17,547
	30,962	21,973	22,984	35,344
<b>Total</b>	<b>131,787</b>	<b>146,666</b>	<b>172,040</b>	<b>174,692</b>

(Source: Reiners 1985: 4)

### The Refugees and the Act of 1980

At the end of the fifties, social movements started in Central America and the Caribbean, and a flow of refugees began. The first and main movement was the one of the Cubans. In 1962 the "Migration and Refugee Assistance Act" was enacted. This act authorized ongoing support for

welfare, health, and social services programs through federal, state, and local support.

Between 1945 and the mid-eighties, the United States received over two million refugees, mainly Cubans and Vietnamese. Cuba alone brought about 360,000 migrants to the United States between 1965 and 1979 (Reiners 1985: 124).

In general, the United States' refugee and immigration policy was reactive rather than protective. The U.S. responded to extraordinary occurrences by permitting a limited number of refugees to enter the U.S. on a conditional basis. The overriding rationale was to aid people from Communist or repressive governments. By the "Refugee Act of 1980," a new definition of refugees included persons from any part of the world, not just communist countries. The Act provides federal support for refugee resettlement and domestic assistance programs. These include cash assistance, Medicaid, Title XX services, Supplemental Social Security Income, payments to public or private voluntary agencies, funding for projects which aid in securing employment and increasing self-reliance (e.g., English as a second language, special educational services, and child welfare services), and unemployment benefits and assistance through the Unemployment Insurance Program. But the Haitians and most of the Mariel immigrants did not qualify for refugee status. Then a new term was used for them: "entrants." So, Cubans and Haitian entrants were



supposed to receive the same services as refugees (Lieberman 1982: 2-4). This was one the ambiguities or semi-legalities that is used to avoid granting to people of certain ethnic, race or class characteristics what is given to others with the same political qualifications. On the other hand, Haitians did not receive the same services as other refugees or the ones of the "Marielitos," neither this last group receive the same treatment than former, more "white" cubans (see Portes, Stepick and Truelove 1986).

#### The IRCA Law of 1986

This legislation, Immigration Reform and Control Act - IRCA- of 1986 (Pub. L. No. 99-603), was the major change in the United States' immigration policy since the Immigration Act of 1965 and the Bracero Program in the forties and fifties. In conjunction with the procedures for asylum application, IRCA also has been the law that has had a greater effect on the lives of immigrants in Indiantown and West Palm Beach.

The three major purposes of the Immigration and Nationality Act were 1) to establish employer sanctions in an effort to control illegal immigration, 2) to provide amnesty through a controlled legalization program for certain undocumented aliens who had been living in the United States since before January 1, 1982, and 3) to establish another program to legalize temporary foreign

agricultural workers (Montwieler 1987). This last program was better known as the "Ninety Days Law" because it provided that people who had been working in agriculture for 90 days between April 1985 and April 1986 (and later it was enhanced to April 1986-1987 and 1987-1988) were eligible for temporary resident status for one year (red card), renewable up three years, and then enabled the person to apply for a resident visa (green card) (Arturo 1991: 154).

#### The OP-1 Immigrant Visa Program of 1989, the "Lottery"

The OP-1 Program was a limited offering of United States Immigrant visas, designed to enhance diversity in immigration and makes available 10,000 visas for fiscal year 1990, and 10,000 for fiscal year 1991. "OP-1" is the visa classification symbol used for this immigrant category. People from underrepresented countries qualified for the program. An underrepresented country was one which, in fiscal year 1988, used fewer than 5,000 immigrant visa numbers. For Central America, those countries were Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua.

The way the State Department determined who got the visas was a lottery. During March 1989, the State Department accepted petitions from people who wished to participate in the lottery and placed the names in a computer. The computer selected 20,000 names at random, and those 20,000 people will, over the next two years, be invited to apply for a

permanent resident visa through the United States embassy or consulate in their home country (United States Department of State 1989, Florida Rural Legal Services 1989).

One thousand OP-1 applications in Indiantown were filled by Corn Maya, the first ethnic organization of Mayans in Florida, founded in 1983 (see Chapter Three), in March 1989. But only three of them resulted in green cards, and permanent visas. For 1994 another OP-1 program have been announced.

Coping With Asylum in the United States: Crisis or Opportunity? The ABC Settlement Agreement

In 1993, 13,520 Guatemalans applied for political asylum in the United States. Up that year, only 44 cases, 0.3 percent were approved. There were 83,476 cases pending, of whom 60,000 were under the American Baptist Church --ABC-- Settlement Agreement (Source: Immigration Law News 1993) The ABC program, as it is called allowed asylum applicants between 1988 and 1991 to get revised their applications. As many of the applications were made for lawyers and paralegals that made one story and filled it in all the cases, the INS considered the applications "frivolous." The church asked for a revision of the applications for the Salvadorans and Guatemalans. Now, another program, Provisional Transitory Status --PTS-- is requested to the INS for the same nationalities. Those are part of

Immigration and Nationality Act of 1992 (Congress of the United States 1992, and D.C. Bar 1992).

Despite the situation described above the I.N.S. has not acted on the asylum applications. In the past, applicants have been granted work authorizations while their cases are pending. Recently the I.N.S. has announced a policy designed to defer the immigration from Guatemala and other Central American Countries. Effectively, the I.N.S. is unwilling to face the consequences of deporting the refugees to the perils of Guatemala while at the same time it is unwilling to acknowledge the validity of their asylum claims.

The Mayans remain in a judicial limbo -*In Purgatory*-. Until this recent change in policy they were at least granted work authorization. However, under the I.N.S.'s new policy, new asylum applicants are being refused work authorizations and asylum applicants who have applications pending are being refused extension of their work authorizations. The efforts of the immigrants and their advocates in the struggle for stay here are also reflexes of the semi-legality and ambiguity of the United States policy toward certain national and ethnic groups. They are an example of the selectivity of the emispheric immigrants through political, racial and ethnic filters.

Negotiating Unequal Relations of Power:  
The Ethnic Boundaries

Immigrants as a Threat

In a radio broadcast on National Public Radio, Noon Edition, January 26, 1994, one of the interviewed persons, a California politician, said: "There is no recession in California. It is all caused by illegal aliens that take jobs from Americans." The Governor of that state plans to run for re-election, and one the strongest points of his platform is to get tough laws and regulations against the illegal immigrants that constitute a burden for health programs, education programs, and all the other basic state services.

Placing blame on the immigrants, legal or illegal, for social problems, is not new in America, as historians have pointed out. Vecoli (1985) states that since the passing of the Immigration Law of 1965, the influx of newcomers has not only increased substantially, but also has changed dramatically in character. Alarm, particularly in regard to the flow of illegal aliens, resulted in the creation by Congress in 1978 of the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. Immigrants were accused of taking jobs away from American workers. They were said to constitute a burden on the country's social services; they are charged with contributing to criminality and immorality. Less explicit is the aversion to the "new" immigrants because of

their racial and cultural differences. The Latinos and Asians have transformed the cultural and racial character of cities such as Los Angeles, New York, and Miami. I must add that neither Latinos nor Asians are homogeneous. The Hispanic population is comprised of such diverse national groups as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. Vecoli concludes that, because of their dense concentrations and strong attachments to their languages, the two mentioned minorities--Latinos and Asians--have been identified as a particular threat to the "cultural unity" of the United States (Vecoli 1985: 7-9). The hypothesis is that class differentiation within a particular minority provides prospective entrepreneurs with privileged access to labor among lower-status members of the same group along with a captive market, differentiated by specific cultural tastes (Bonacich and Cheng 1984, Wilson and Portes 1980, Bach 1986, cited in Portes 1987: 347)

One of the consequences of the ethnic economy is the promotion of female employment, especially among married women, because it is easier for them to find employment in ethnic firms without language barriers and with flexible work schedules, small firms start by employing relatives, and wage work by members of the same family permits the accumulation of capital to start their own business (Portes 1987: 352).

### The Ethnic Enclave

The importance of the enclave can be seen in the fact that by 1984, 5 of the 10 largest Hispanic-owned firms in the country and 4 of the 10 largest banks were part of the Cuban enclave, at a time when this group represented just 5% of the Spanish-origin population (Portes and Truelove 1987: 370). Due to the enclave, successive flows of Cubans have been able to make use of past human capital endowment and at times to exceed their expected level of attainment. It allows many people to put to use their occupational skills and experience without having to wait during a long period of cultural adaptation. It creates opportunities for upward mobility either within existing firms or through self-employment. The employees survive by taking advantage of the cheap and generally disciplined labor of the new arrivals (Portes and Truelove 1987: 370).

It is the absence of a privileged relationship with the state, Portes and Bach argue, that compels immigrant entrepreneurs to rely upon the economic potential of ethnic solidarity. Ethnic bonds can be activated, under circumstances characteristic of each group, to provide initial capital for business ventures. They also can help erect barriers around the community to protect its market from outside competition. Employers can profit from the voluntary self-exploitation of fellow immigrants, but they also are obligated to reserve for them those supervisory

positions that open in their firms, to train them in trade skills, and to support their eventual move into self-employment. It is the fact that enclave firms are compelled to rely on ethnic solidarity and that the latter cuts both ways, which creates opportunities for mobility available on the outside. It is the way in which ethnicity permeates class relations in this situation that distinguishes enclave employment from that in the secondary sector (Portes and Bach 1985: 342-343).

### Latin Americans in the United States

Although Mayans are not Latins or Hispanics, nonetheless the Mexicans are part of this stream; Mayans come from a Latin American country, and most of their relations in both Indiantown and West Palm Beach are with *latinos*. Furthermore, the new waves of immigrants coming to the two places are increasingly formed of *ladinos* (see *glossary*). In order to understand the presence and behavior of Latin Americans and other groups in South Florida, I should address first the issue of the presence of Latins in the United States.

In the first place, there is no such thing as a Latin American ethnic unit in political terms. It is more an aggregate in the U.S. Census Bureau and other Federal agencies, under the label of "Hispanic," than a real unity. Thus, we are speaking of people from many different



countries, labeled "Latin" or "Hispanic" in regard to the language, who represent a heterogeneous population with respect to other aspects of their backgrounds. The term "Hispanic" refers to people who have immigrated to the United States during a period of time that includes from the time of the independence to the latest refugees from El Salvador and Nicaragua. Many of them are no longer immigrants, as in the case of the Chicanos, or have never been as in the case of the settlers of Hispanic origin who arrived in the area of present-day New Mexico or Texas before the arrival of the Mayflower. There are several categories: immigrants, who are economically motivated; refugees, who are politically motivated; and entrants, with an undefined status or pending asylum application as in the case of the Mayans. Latins are neither an ethnic group nor a race. Latins are made up of a mixture of different racial and ethnic groups, including indigenous people. There is no class homogeneity among them. They constitute a minority, forming part of the system of minorities in the United States.

In regard to the economic importance and viability of getting information about them, the three main Latin and Caribbean groups are Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. Although the other groups may have great importance in economic terms, as in the case of the Colombians and the

cocaine market in the United States, there are very few sources that provide specific information.

### Who are the "Hispanics"?

There are not many histories of Hispanics as such, but rather histories of individual national groups written, more often than not, by scholars of the same group. Recently, some books have been published with a more holistic approach, e.g., Latin Journey (Portes and Bach 1985), Hispanic U.S.A (Weyr 1988), and Latinos (Shorris 1992). Historical accounts of the Mexican-American population, for example, are written from a critical perspective, using as a theoretical framework ideas drawn from dependency, internal colonialism, class conflict, and related approaches.

Central and South Americans generally settled in large cities, especially in California, Florida, and New York. In New York they lived near other Hispanics in Queens, where Colombians, Peruvians, Argentines, Ecuadorans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans circulate. Many Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, and Costa Ricans settled in California cities.

Over 75% of the 14.5 million people identified by the 1980 census as Hispanic are concentrated in just four states--California, New York, Texas, and Florida. California alone has absorbed almost one-third (U.S. Bureau of Census 1983, cited in Portes and Truelove 1987: 360). The bulk of the Spanish-origin population, at least 60%, are

of Mexican origin, half of them native born. Another 14% come from Puerto Rico and are American citizens by birth. The Cubans are the group third in size, who represent about 5%.

Some authors think that there are three factors that sort Latins and other migrants into the labor market sector: 1) how much English they command, 2) whether they have developed skills that are acceptable in the United States, and 3) in what industries their compatriots are already established (Freedman 1985: 157). But this generalization does not take into account the structures that receive or incorporate them into the market. In their study about Cubans and Mexicans, Portes and Bach state that they are prototypes of political and economic migrants, respectively. Yet the distinct motivations and skills attributed to each of these groups could not be identified in the empirical data. The factors that differed and that accounted for the manifold differences in their attainment processes were the social contexts the groups encountered in the United States. Both groups spoke very little English after being in the United States for six years. Self-employment and the economic returns on human capital that the enclave made possible had little to do with the ability and motivation of individual refugees, but depended instead upon the social structures that received them. In contrast, although many Mexicans had more education and occupational training than

their Cuban counterparts, the number of Mexican small businessmen after six years in the United States was almost zero (Portes and Bach 1985).

### Impact of the Latin Immigrants to the United States

In order to understand the differentiated economic impact of the Latin migration in the United States, we should keep in mind that there are differentiations in the flows, the intensity and duration of the flows, and the type of economic behavior among them. While the Cubans represent an enclave entrepreneurship (many authors claim that the rebirth and development of Miami is due to that entrepreneurship), the Mexicans represent mainly a labor force, while the Puerto Ricans are both, but on a smaller scale. Argentines and Colombians are important for the flow of professionals. In this universe, Mayans, as refugees and semi-legals, are a unique and special case.

### Assimilation, Criticism, and Integration

Great cultural and race differences set the Mayans apart from all the other human groups that come to South Florida from Latin America. The hispanic perception, as well as that of the "host" groups, is that they can be integrated but never assimilated.

Elements of conflict are present both in the restricted access to positions of economic advantage confronted by many

immigrants and in their subjective perceptions of how they are treated by the dominant majority. From the theoretical perspective, Portes and Bach (1985) polarize the assimilation-integration debate in two positions. According to the first, lack of assimilation can be regarded as a consequence of initial mutual ignorance and distrust and the lack of preparedness of immigrants to deal with the cultural requirements of the society. The contrary hypothesis states that education, knowledge of English, and information do not lead to assimilation, as migrants come to learn their real social position and are exposed to prejudice and discrimination.

Portes and Bach conclude that the more critical immigrants probably are more integrated than those who continue to adhere to uniform and often highly idealized views. The latter often live in American society without being a part of it. Adaptation to American society, they say, does not consist of ignoring its many contradictions and conflicts, as implicitly suggested by assimilation theorists. It consists instead of grasping these constraints and reacting to them as part of the struggle for social recognition and ascent. Being aware of the problems does not guarantee overcoming them, but represents a first and necessary condition for incorporation into a new social order.

In conclusion, Portes and Bach state that the more historically valid hypotheses in such areas as the origins of migration and its shifting directions in time are the views of immigrant labor movements as processes **internal** to a changing international system. Further, this perspective facilitates relating labor migrations to other events occurring simultaneously, such as capital and commodity flows.

### Hypothesis to Test

The queuing theory states that those groups at the bottom of the American labor market are there because they were latest in the queue. Instead, the history of such minorities as blacks and Mexican-Americans has been marked by reversals of past economic and social achievements and by a semipermanent confinement to the bottom rungs of the occupational ladder, while other more recent arrivals have climbed ahead. This is well exemplified with the case of blacks in Indiantown and other areas of Martin County. It is not the case that "successful" immigrant groups have achieved their economic and social prominence by patiently waiting their turn in the ethnic queue. The factor that distinguishes these experiences is that major gains were achieved during the first generation. Statements about benign ethnic succession and gradual progress continue to be voiced, even by individuals from the most disadvantaged

minorities, because of their ideological usefulness as instruments of legitimation.

As a whole, the experiences of Cuban and Mexican immigrants, Portes and Bach declare, provide a practical lesson. Entering at a disadvantage into the labor market and social institutions of the receiving country, preservation of their culture and internal solidarity represent crucial instruments of adaptation. Individual skills and dreams are important, but their effects can be easily blunted outside the appropriate context. Adaptation to American society has always taken place and will continue to do so, but its direction and the manner in which subsequent generations become integrated into the mainstream depend on the modes of incorporation and the economic accomplishments of the earlier immigrants.

Portes and Bach advance an alternative interpretation, labelled "structural," contrasting its predictions with the ones from the individual perspective. One of the theses of this approach is that opportunities for interaction are significantly determined by the ethnic composition of the labor force in places of employment. Employment in Cuban enclave firms in Miami is the significant factor among Cuban refugees. Residence in a Mexican barrio occupies a comparable place among Mexican immigrants. Ethnic flexibility, not assimilation, is the theoretical perspective more congruent with this interpretation. This

flexibility is not a force leading to collective withdrawal, but rather a moral resource, an integral part of the process of establishing and defining a place in a new society. The Mayans as presented in this text are a clear example of this flexibility and at the same time of the preservation of cultural traditions.

In conclusion, for looking at the migrants in a proper perspective we shall take into account that they form part of an international system that operates in two ways. The impact of United States' and other First World countries' economies and international policies in the Third World is the main cause of international mobilization of migrants to the United States. Because of this, because it is an structural problem, it is not going to stop in the future. Migrants from the Third World and specifically from Latin America will continue to come, legally or illegally. But, as many authors point out (Gilder 1985, Levine 1985, Magill 1985, Miller 1985, Portes, Stepick and Truelove 1986, Reiners 1985), most of the migrants are "making it," and they are contributing more than they are taking. Even if at first, as in the case of the Vietnamese and Cubans in the sixties and the Cuban Marielitos and the "boat people" in the eighties, they may be a burden on the provision of public services, this is not true in the long run. The Mayans, a self-supported group, clearly are not a burden, as it is demonstrated in Chapter Five of this dissertation.



### Ethnic Migration to the Cities

Mayans have spread over the area of Martin and Palm Beach counties. As they moved to the West Palm Beach area they have encountered another reality, that of the inner city.

In the post-World War II era, blacks and Puerto Ricans constituted a third wave of migrants to the northern cities (Erie 1985: 249). The new immigration promises to transform dramatically the political life of many of the nation's growing sunbelt cities, particularly Miami, San Antonio, El Paso, and Los Angeles, where the new migrants approach 50% of the population.

The situation of the newer urban ethnics is uncertain. While they are increasing in number in urban areas, to date their growth has not seemed to be translated into widespread political victories. In the area of social welfare, they often have resisted even the minimal help that society has made available. Cultural values characterized by a strong individualistic ethic have tended to restrict their support for and utilization of social welfare services.

However, as the new urban immigrants become more urbanized and discover that survival in the city is different from survival in rural villages and mountains, increased use of and need for social welfare provisions can be expected. Already there are indications that the older immigrants are beginning to press for more adequate social

welfare programs. This is what has been called the "convergence of class and ethnicity" (Moore 1981, cited in Magill 1985: 208).

Demographic trends ensure that Hispanics will exercise a far greater degree of urban power in the future. The number of eligible Chicano voters will mushroom in the nineties. The Chicano community is young, with an average age of 18 versus 30 for Anglos. In cities such as Los Angeles, over one-quarter of the Hispanic community lacks proper documentation and thus is ineligible for citizenship and the vote; however, the sons and daughters of undocumented aliens born in the United States are citizens and thus ultimately will be eligible voters.

This last statement is best understood when we realize that slow incorporation is the norm, not the exception, for working-class ethnic groups in the United States. And now, as Erie (1985: 274) says, the slow incorporation of Chicanos is invidiously compared with that of blacks.

### CHAPTER THREE BETWEEN THE BOILING POT AND THE INNER CITY

The challenges that newcomers must face and also the changes that local black and white. Americans and other older residents face because of immigration and the related processes are presented in this chapter. In doing so, different ethnic perspectives in Indiantown and West Palm Beach are underscored.

Complementarily, the differences between Indiantown (the boiling pot) and West Palm Beach (the inner city) are shown from the perspective of the organizations and the narratives of the Mayans and other immigrants.

#### The Boiling Pot

From the perspective of the different ethnic groups, a reference to the processes that have developed in Indiantown and of the different moments was inevitable. It is not a history of the town but rather a blend of the different perspectives the people have of the events.



FIGURE 3-1  
LIVING IN THE INNER CITY



FIGURE 3-2  
INNER CITY, THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Also, the informants refer to other ethnic groups as they express their thoughts about how those others are doing or not doing things. After a while in the conversation, everybody refers to the Mayans, as they have become the point of reference for many of the other business groups in town, not only because of their oddness with the "American Way of Life," but also because of the shortcomings of those who criticize them.

Prejudice and stereotypes are pretty much present in Indiantown, and also class differences, because as one older resident says, "It is not the same to talk about the situation as it is to share the street with them," referring to the Maya. Mayans are the most conspicuous part of the boiling pot that Indiantown is now. For whites the fact that Mayans are Native Americans makes it desirable to "civilize" them and in general change them to fit in the standards of the "American Way of Life." Thus, many whites and other older residents at first wanted to change the Mayans' behavior, but after several years they are giving up and don't want to live with them. The resistance of Mayans reinforces the stereotypes and prejudices.

Mayans are not as segregated into neighborhoods like blacks and Haitians; neither are they immersed so much in an anesthetic (drinking, doing drugs, living on welfare) behavior as are blacks, and that's what makes them so atypical, strong, and unpredictable to the older residents.

Another important part of the way of thinking in the region is that older residents want to see Mayans as farm workers, but they are not. They don't behave like farm workers. They started like agricultural workers, but now they are diversifying their labor, as shown in Chapter Five.

As part of the cycle of movement of American migrants to southern towns, almost all of the youngsters, blacks and also whites, that get a college education, and others for different reasons move out of town and come back only to visit. Another issue that is influencing those movements is the space that Mayans and Mexicans are gaining in several neighborhoods in the town, and some are buying the houses. In that behavior, Mayans also are atypical of other immigrants. As I said before, they are all over the town except in the exclusive white residential areas.

Some whites even express openly that they are moving out of town because they cannot take any more of the influx of Mayans in town--in the housing, in the supermarkets, all over the place. However, this position is not unanimous. It depends of the level of contact with them--whether or not they share the same vital spaces--and the understanding of their culture and their own goals and purposes.

A very important development in the situation was pointed out to me by one of the black informants. She said that Indiantown is now a community, but not the community it used to be. "We no longer know each other, not knowing who

our neighbors are or being able to talk with them." In other words, Indiantown is no longer a black and white town but a multi-ethnic place, a boiling pot.

### The Place

Indiantown is an unincorporated town in Martin County, located in South Florida, to the east of Lake Okeechobee where State Roads 710 and 706 intersect, 24 miles south-west of Stuart, the seat of Martin County, 33 miles north of West Palm Beach, 35 miles south of Okeechobee, 175 miles south of Orlando, 150 miles north of Miami, and 225 miles south of Gainesville, home of the University of Florida.

The central point in town is at the only traffic light on State Road 710 and the street of the Holy Cross Center and the beauty salon. The layout of the town around the road is a reminder that the town started as a railroad station. On Warfield Boulevard, the local name of State Road 710, or very close to it are the main businesses or offices: the supermarket, four gas stations with mini-markets, a bar, a liquor store, the Seminole Inn, the Corn Maya's office, the new Burger King, the ice cream parlor, the hardware store, the telephone company, the pharmacy, the new library, the Indiantown News office, the Martin County Courthouse Annex, the Health Department Unit, and the new Civic Center. The St. Lucie Canal marks the southern end of

the town, and it is the location of "La Marina," the white upper-class neighborhood with the boats and yachts.

One mile north of downtown to the right of State Road 710 is the White Camp, *Campo Blanco*. To the left of the street is Booker Park, which contains the Blue Camp, *Campo Azul*. Booker Park is a multi-ethnic place where most of the blacks, Haitians, and Mayans live upon their arrival (see Figure 1-7). A description of these neighborhoods is provided in the section on housing in Chapter Four of this dissertation.

Other important places in Indiantown are the Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Education Center for Adults, the New Hope Rural School, and the Chamber of Commerce, besides the places indicated above.

According to the 1990 Census, Indiantown has a population of 4,794, and if we add the population of Booker Park, 3523, there is a total of 8,317. However, the actual figure would be higher if we take into account that many of the semi-legal immigrants are not censused and that the population fluctuates with the work season. According to the wave of migration and the month of the year, the real figure could be as many as 11,000 inhabitants.

#### Brief History of Indiantown

From the accounts of whites, blacks, Chicanos, Mexicans, Guatemalans, and brokers, and with data from other



researchers, we compile a chronology of the town, not a history in the disciplinary sense but how these people perceive how the town has evolved.

#### A Chronology of Indiantown

- 1890        One hundred years ago Indiantown was a campsite for Seminole Indians (Ashabranner and Conklin 1986: 4).
- 1920        The Seminole Inn opened operations.
- 1944        Blue Camp was built.
- 1950        Arrival of English people for the book factory.
- 1965        Public schools were integrated.
- 1969        Until the late sixties the field work was done by blacks. Then, came social programs to re-train blacks for other jobs and an influx of Mexican-Americans, Haitians, Jamaicans, and Guatemalans.
- 1978        The construction of the Energy Plant started. It was a financial boost to Indiantown, providing construction jobs.
- 1982        The first Mayans arrived, perhaps drawn by the name of the town. Almost immediately, a sympathy wave from the Catholic Church and some white leaders helped them, although they had to endure the hardships of farm work.
- 1983        The Holy Cross Center was established.

1983        Corn Maya was created as the Corn Maya project (Orientation Committee for Mayan Indian Refugees). It started to support Mayans for the presentation of their asylum cases to the National Immigration Service.

1986        The Immigration Reform Act Amendment of 1986 was approved by United States Congress, and many immigrants in Indiantown and nearby zones applied for the 90 day program. Still more started to come from Guatemala.

1986-1989

Difficult years; many problems between ethnic groups and bad press. Almost no houses were build during that time.

1986        Mayans started buying houses. Up to 1989 they purchased them mainly for living purposes. From 1989-1991 they bought houses for business purposes, renting them to too many people, exploiting their own people.

1988        The conversations of leaders of different groups took place in order to ease tensions among the groups and to provide a positive image for the town, which was very negative at that time in the media. A campaign was started.

1988        The *Posadas* (see Appendix B), a religious celebration, was held in St. Ignatius Cathedral in

Palm Beach Gardens, as an allegory of the situation of the Mayans in the region and the persecution of the Sacred Family two thousand years ago.

1988 Up this year, most of Guatemalans were Mayan Kanjobals from San Miguel and San Juan Ixcay. Today there are people from several towns and regions, and Ladinos.

1990-1993

The second part of the energy plant was built, bringing new jobs for whites and a few blacks, Mexicans, and Mayans.

#### Mayans in Indiantown, as Seen by Whites

1982-1985

Arrival of Guatemalans was a period that was hard for the older residents and also for the newcomers; period of initial tensions.

1986-1987

New groups arrive, with people from different places than the first ones. Guatemalans take more work than Mexicans. Period of increasing tensions.

1988-1989

Trying to solve the tensions, a series of meetings are held to get to know one another better.

1990-1994

Guatemalans became part of normal, daily life. With criticisms up and down, they were now here for good.

### Let the People Speak Out

To illustrate the characteristics of intergroup opinions and relationships I now turn to summarize perspectives and the personal statements of representative people living in Indiantown. This will highlight the nature of both social relations and the cultural and social problems that underlie Indiantown community affairs.

### The White Perspective

The white perspective has gone from one of curiosity and paternalism to that of rejection and mixed reactions. When asked about immigrants, all informants, not only whites, referred to the Maya as Guatemalans. The comparison is inevitable with Hispanic immigrants and as a reference in time when they arrived. As mentioned before, mobility--expressed by not staying in farm work and not being segregated--are two traits that go along with the reluctance of many to fit into the "American Way of Life" and make the Guatemalans undesirable, especially if there are so many.

On the surface the discontent seems to be with Guatemalans, but digging deeper it is also with Mexicans,

Haitians, and even with other Americans. As Susan (see her narrative below) says, "This town is owned by a small group of people who do not care about the community."

Many whites do not distinguish between the different groups of Guatemalans, but the ones who work with them do. They establish differences between the early Mayan immigrants from San Miguel, whom they consider less educated, and more recent ones.

Mary Smith<sup>1</sup>. As presented in Chapter One, when I first arrived in Indiantown in 1988, I interviewed Mary, a lady who has been in contact with the refugees--as they were considered at that time-- practically since the first ones came in 1982. As also presented in the introduction Mary is one of the white residents of the Marina residence zone. Her husband has build and is owner of several houses in town. She had been teaching English to them and serving as translator at the post office, the bank, and similar places.

Mary points out that the irritation the white community has with Guatemalans is because of their numbers. "The problem is not that they are Guatemalans, nor that they are Indians, but that they are too many." Whites feel threatened when they go to the supermarket and find a lot more Mexicans and Guatemalans than whites.

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<sup>1</sup> Again, all names are fictitious unless otherwise indicated.

After all her experience working with immigrants and stating that her parents were also immigrants from Ireland, she perceives that Mayans "are learning English enough to go through. They are not ready to get accustomed to the whole culture. They only learn how to survive. "

Mary states the difference between Mayans and Guatemalans. "Mexicans were never a problem. They were here before me. They were in Booker Park, not in the white section. Their children went to the Spanish school there, until 1965 when the schools were integrated. Now there is a second generation. And those kids are marvelous. They went to school and some to college."

For Mary, Guatemalans who are working in *labor*<sup>2</sup>, with two or three years of education from San Miguel, are going to remain in labor. But, in general, Guatemalans have improved their jobs. They are now working at golf courses, in landscaping, in other aspects of citrus camps, in chicken packing plants. She says they are very aggressive in finding jobs because they understand how important it is. Some other immigrants do not understand the importance of having jobs all year round. Mexicans can do a lot during the orange season, but then they are going to be out of work for a long time.

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<sup>2</sup> *La labor* means agricultural work, mainly picking up citrus and vegetables (see glossary).

For Mary the key to the situation with immigrants, Guatemalans and Mexicans, and Blacks, is education. Education explains why some immigrants behave poorly while others are better, and also can be the way for improvement. She insists that Guatemalans from San Miguel<sup>3</sup> are poorly educated. They were the first ones to arrive. Now the people from Totonicapan who are coming are better educated and have goals in life.

The lack of education is transposed to other aspects of life, like religion. Referring to the changes in religion, many Catholics are now shifting to protestant cults. "That is terrible. The problem is that they are not educated. They do not know their own religion. And when you are not educated you are vulnerable to any argument. In the last three years these cults have gone after them."

Mary states that the problem is not with the Mayan families that are consolidated here but with the single men who overcrowd the houses or live packed in single units. However, she establishes differences: "There are nice boys involved in sports and church, while most of them are into drinking and bad behavior." But also, she realizes that this is a moment in the flow of the immigration--that single men can be married in Guatemala and go back and bring their

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Because of the antagonism between the Catholic Church and Mayan religion and the emphasis the former put in changing the names of previous Mayan places, many of the names of towns and villages in Guatemala are names of Catholic saints.

families. For her, it is clear that this is a situation of cultural difference. "This is not the white position but the American position", she says referring to the irritation with Mayans.

If her experience tells her that it would not be possible to educate most of the present generation of Mayans, still the key for their adaptation to the "American Way of Life" is education--education of the children who she says are wonderful kids. "Children are marvelous, they are going to be the break point. You don't see it in the first generation."

This sensibility and perception but at the same time irritation with the situation is expressed in her understanding of the housing conditions. She says that the infamous conditions of living in the Blue Camp have two sides. They rent a room for 4 guys and then 10 move in. That means problems for both sides. The guy is taking advantage of Guatemalans, but also it is impossible to keep a place in good shape with such overcrowding. A lot of the Mexicans do not live there because Guatemalans drink all the way from Friday to Sunday.

Another place, the Yellow Camp, was also a nice place that went down and down. It was first built for white people. Mary points out that one of the most difficult tasks is improving the housing situation in town. Because of regulations and norms, the prices make homes unavailable.



"It is difficult because the houses are costing \$80,000. We have a wonderful piece of land, perfect to build houses, one acre of land. But it costs \$500,000 to develop it. We do not have that kind of money." That is the explanation of why many Mayans have gone or want to go to places nearby like West Palm Beach, Jupiter, Boynton Beach, and Stuart.

Mary summarizes her main concerns about Indiantown in health, drunkenness, and drugs. The tuberculosis (TB) is a problem. "The white community does not realize how serious this problem is. Last year 28 people tested positive. But as they do not feel sick they do not care about transmitting the disease. It is again a problem of education. And also they do not follow the prescription for the medicines."

To this disease situation should be added the AIDS problem. She affirms that there are many cases. "Last year seven black girls who tested positive for HIV were pregnant, every one of them. There are so many drugs in Booker Park that girls prostitute themselves for getting them." That means that AIDS, prostitution, and drugs go together. "A Guatemalan doctor who worked here said he had never seen such an epidemic of venereal diseases as in Indiantown, not even in Puerto Rico or New York. So, something should be done about prostitution in Booker Park or we are going to have the worst epidemic of AIDS in Indiantown. But Guatemalans who have it do not do anything about disease if they are not lying sick in bed."

The other serious problem is the cars being driven by drunk drivers. Jairo (see his narrative below) has tried and has done a wonderful job, but there is no solution if so many Guatemalans continue arriving.

She remembers well the 1988 meetings, but . . . "The meetings of 1988 sounded very nice--attracting tourists with the Mayan culture--on the other hand, it is not so when you have to live with them. It is difficult to keep the community going with so few leaders in the community. We have tried to involve Hispanics, but they do not come. But the people who in the two last years have bought houses are changing. They are becoming more involved, and perhaps will get involved in education--that is the key."

It should be noted that the Mayan behavior should not take all the blame, but also the cultural differences with other groups, like Mexicans and whites, that do not get involved in the business of the community. She says that right now and in the future, Guatemalans will get more involved in the community business than Mexicans.

Comparing blacks and Guatemalans, Mary says that the former are unambitious, that they have a very poor attitude, and that it is very difficult to work with them. "Guatemalans are going to do better in time, no doubt in my mind." She affirms that there are many young people into drugs, and cocaine and HIV go together. There has been very little improvement for blacks during the last 30 years. It

is because they lack the ambition to do things. People have to make things happen themselves. Guatemalans do; blacks do not.

Another problem, adds Mary, is that if a young black couple is going to marry, they do not share a house with four or more people. They have to have a new car and all kinds of nice clothes. They have a standard of living a little bit higher than Guatemalans that does not allow them to save and at the same time find a good house. Guatemalans are going to survive because they save by living in crowded conditions.

Sean O'Brian. As presented in Chapter One, Sean is a young white man that has an important position in the community as owner of one of the main companies in town and also as a civic leader.

He recognizes that Mayans do not fit into the "American Way of Life," but he says it is not a static position--the new generation will be different. But at the same time, he points out that the changes could be devastating for the parents, because the children are the retirement plan of the Mayans.

He finds that, for example, at the beginning there were only one or two leaders, Jairo (see his narrative below) and Cochise Rodríguez, and now it is possible to have many, more than 10. This affirmation is confirmed by what I found upon my return to Indiantown and with the research done in West

Palm Beach, as presented later in this chapter and Chapter Six. He also expresses that brokers have played a key role in the change of the situation. He was referring to Father Frank and Pamela at the beginning, and then other Mayans like Jairo; according to him, it helped to solve the tensions.

He also mentioned the 1988 meeting that he recalls as something that helped the different ethnic groups in Indiantown to know one another better, although the things proposed were never done. Sean points out as signs of improvement for Mayans that they are driving better vehicles, have better houses, and are performing a greater diversity of jobs.

He understands that there is still antagonism and prejudice. "Some people in the white community are just so ignorant they cannot be helped." He adds, "These people came here running for their lives." And still, he says, "They are positive people who are always smiling. That was something that impressed me from the beginning." He affirms that has learned from them how fortunate we are here in the United States and to respect the hard work they do in the fields.

Sean sees the lack of adequate housing as one of the main problems in Indiantown. But in his positive way of seeing things, he says that the Indiantown Non-Profit Organization has built some houses and now is building 10

more. He suggests with humor that if they are for Mayans, a lot more than 10 families are going to occupy them. In this same way he points that the Mayans who are buying houses are taking good care of them.

At the same time, he does not find many places for inter-ethnic relations. He pointed to the Fourth of July as a fun event for all the people of the community (see figures P-7, P-8, and P-9). And although perhaps now more people are attending the event, it is really a white thing watched by the other groups. Then he said that sports are other occasions of interaction. Perhaps this is mostly for school children, but now the soccer games for the workers are played between Mayans and Mexicans.

Susan Dougherty. Susan was presented in Chapter One as a middle-class, semi-retired woman.

"My husband and I are trying to decide what to do. Another Mexican abuses his family. We do not want to see those things. They are irrational, irresponsible. A guy said that this is the way we do things in our country. I said this is America. People said that we do not understand their culture. But I know other Guatemalan people that do not behave like that. I feel bad for Guatemalans being exploited by blacks in Blue Camp. It is the way they live. Ten people in that house, plus four kids. They make \$600 a month and have to pay rent, and the landlords charge by the head, \$25 per week. "

"My husband and I are getting overwhelmed. I talked to a real estate agent. She said there are now many Haitians, not only in Booker Park but in the Big Mound area. They also damage the houses. The real estate agent said that in five to seven years, Indiantown will be a town of immigrants only. I think it is not an extravagant expectation to have peace. There are 25 or 30 Haitians living in that green house. Besides that, in the garage of the house there are 15 Guatemalans. "

"Zora has done a wonderful job, not only for blacks, for Indiantown too. My parents are from Germany. I guess is easy to stereotype people, and then believe your own prejudices."

"I admire Guatemalan women. I admire their families. I do not have the guts to do that traveling. Women have such quiet dignity. I admire them for what they have done. And they are learning to put children in school. I hope they will keep some traits of their culture. They care for each other, especially the women."

"Seasonal workers are young males, drinking, all over the place. The violence is unreal because they are far away from their families. Mexicans are very nice neighbors, with solidarity among males. Maria and her family are threatened for her boyfriend. I will do anything to help them. Guatemalans are very nice, but not when they are drinking. They drink out of frustration. I wish they could find a

place to live. Another issue is to educate the women; that is very important. They give birth and in two days are back working."

"But the problem is that this town is owned by a small group of people who do not care about the community. They take advantage of the Guatemalans, in the houses, and also cash their checks charging 3%. They do not care if they are Guatemalans or Haitians."

### The Black Perspective

In the 50s and 60s blacks were called "negroes," as it appears in Runkhe document (1959), in the 70s and 80s they were called "blacks," and now African Americans. One of the informants said to me, "do not call me African American, I prefer black; it is more direct." Blacks have watched the coming of international immigrants from a quite different perspective.

I conducted interviews with some blacks, and more in depth with two women and one man. One of the ladies is the more recognized leader of the black group. Interestingly, she has moved out of the town, although it was said to me that she owns a house there.

Zora Neal is a leader of the black community in Indiantown, but she is also recognized and admired by all the other ethnic groups and organizations, as presented in Chapter One.

Zora's children grew up in the late 50s and early 60s. Schools were integrated in the early 60s. She says that the difference is that now you have freedom of choice. But blacks were not really accepted in white schools. White schools remained white, and blacks became black and whatever. But even blacks lost controls of their schools. You do not have black schools anymore. They were "their" [government's] schools.

Ethnic groups. "Blacks get along better with Mexicans and Haitians because most of them speak English. Language is the barrier."

"There is no competition between the blacks and the immigrants. Blacks are not working in fields. Neither is there competition among the different Hispanic groups and Haitians, because they do not work in the same things."

Differences between Hispanic and American kids.

"Hispanics and Guatemalans seems to be hungrier than blacks for education. They do not take it for granted. Some of them, but not all. In meetings, Guatemalan parents do not participate because they do not understand what is going on. Spanish should be a part of the school curriculum, especially in this part of the country."

Guatemalans. "Blacks do not like Guatemalans getting drunk, but it is the same with other blacks. Overcrowding in houses is causing a lot of disruption. I do not know if it is for Guatemalans there, but they think everywhere they



go it is a bathroom. When a white sells a house it is not a home anymore, but a hotel. And everything changes. You do not have a mixed community anymore. After a while there are eight families living in a house. They have to be taught how to use baths. They never had a house like that. It is a lot of frustration."

"But we understand what means to live in a place where you are not really accepted. They want to see us at work, but not after work. That's the mentality. We have been in the same situation."

Main problems. "For blacks the main problems are drugs, and not taking advantage of the resources available for you and your children. And it is because in some instances they are very aggressive and not in others. When we need to be aggressive we are passive, and when we need to be passive we are aggressive. That's the way I see it."

"Drugs are easy money. If you sell them you have a sense of power. All consume, but whites say if it is sold in the black community, it is your problem, it is not my problem. They just come here, get it, and go to their homes. And it causes a lot of other things that are not there normally without drugs."

"Life for a black kid means dropping out. It depends on the structure and experience of the family. There are more finishing high school. But it does not make them prepared for good jobs. When they finish college they went

away. There is nothing for them to stay here, no attraction, no night life or that kind of thing. Only two of them have come back. Although, Zora is skeptical, she sees some improvement in the housing conditions, and in the working conditions, some how."

Community. "Indiantown is a community now, but it is not the one where my children grew up. At that time it was a community where we knew each other. Now you do not know the people living on your street, in front of you. Many times you see them only at the church. Sports is an event that makes it easier to communicate."

Bessie White. As presented in Chapter One, Bessie has been in Indiantown since 1956. She says she has come a long way. Back in that times they did not have anything. Her family came from New York City when she was eight or nine years old. The following are her opinions and impressions about immigrants and Indiantown.

Ethnic groups. "It is better now than before. Haitian males marry black women to get green cards, and then divorced. Mexicans prefer whites.. Black girls marry Puerto Ricans guys. Most of the whites will move out. Marina will be the same, its too expensive. But there is a black there, a doctor, an he is a golfer too. This part of town (Corn Maya office) would be more Spanish. I consider Guales, and Mexicans, and Haitians, and Americans. Three different

languages (I explained to her that there is also Mayan language, and she said she considers it Spanish)."

"I worked with Mexicans and other Hispanics in the fields. I could communicate with them, but I have forgotten it now. You can communicate with a person without speaking. But people staying here should learn English, because it is the language of the country. Mexicans speak correct Spanish; Puerto Ricans speak rotten Spanish. English speak correct English; we speak rotten English."

"Kids that went to college do not come back, only to visit. But it is the same with whites. My oldest girl is still in Booker Park and she has a good job. I am hoping that she moves out. "

"There is no competition with Guales (see glossary) and Mexicans, because blacks are all the time . . . give me, give me. . . . They do not use opportunities. They do not get involved in community activities either."

Guatemalans, blacks, and whites. "I communicate with some Guatemalans women even if they do not speak English. At the beginning there was a lot of animosity, because they do not understand the "American Way of Life," but they have learned. They do not know how to use the bathroom, running water. But you can teach them. I am able to learn from people. I am more tough with my people. Whites not only do not want Guales (Guatemalans) in their neighborhood, they do not want blacks. But for me, we all are people."

Main problems. "Main problems for blacks are drugs. If one town is cleaned and the next no, the problem will continue. They know who sells drugs. They sell in houses, in the streets. That is ridiculous. Main problem. Ten, fifteen years without solving it. Young black kids, families living on welfare. A passive position, not going to school. I am going to school. Lack of eagerness to improve that leads to drug problem."

"Other groups work together, blacks do not. As long as they pay the bills, they do not care. They are very peculiar people. Those people live in a house together, Haitians, Jamaicans, the Guales, live together and work together."

"Many houses should be torn down. But it is the home of some person. Case of an old blind woman living in a house. When they tore down the house, I cried. It is better to first ask the people what they want."

Community. "Now with Indiantown Non-Profit houses, we had built three houses, and now another one. It is with the New Hope program. And we are going to have a Cultural Festival in Booker Park, by the 25th of September (1993)."

"We also clean the streets. Dr. Martin Luther King street (it is 441 Florida Road), for example. Not many people are working on that."

### The Mexican Perspective

Immigrants are willing to take risks and make of their mobility a survival strategy, but when they settle this factor diminishes in order to obtain other advantages like better education for their children, better participation in the life of the town, and other satisfactions that come with stability. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans living in Indiantown seems to confirm this assumption.

The perspective of Patricia, a Mexican-American, is quite different in any means of the perspective of Eucario and Dolores, Mexicans, that although they have been in the U.S. all their adult lives, still consider themselves Mexicans and have riots and attachments to that country.

Patricia seems to relate much more to the ideas and considerations expressed by whites, especially of those of the women. On the other hand, Eucario and Dolores have a much more optimistic perspective of the town and a positive way of seeing how things have happened. Their ideas are more in consonance with those of Sean and of some of the Mayan leaders.

Patricia Martínez' story begins, when being a girl she went to work to the fields, picking up tomatoes and oranges. "There were a lot of *moyos* (see glossary) where you work, and very few Hispanics."

"I went to the school here, when it was already integrated, with whites, and a few, 10, Hispanics. There

were no Mexicans in elementary school, but some in the middle school."

"Most of the Mexicans here are from Mexico; they come directly from Mexico. I get along well with Mexicans, I even married one of them."

Ethnic groups. "For Mexicans life depends upon education and the way they spend money. I have seen that some Guatemalans that arrived recently progress more than Mexicans. But some Mexicans have gone to college."

"There are a couple of cases of Mexicans marrying Guatemalans, but not more. Perhaps in the future will be more. Is also that many Mexicans do not stay around. Mexican males and Guatemalans females, not the contrary, it will be in the future. I do not know of Mexicans marrying Americans because of difference of culture."

"Mexicans are coming with coyotes but many by themselves. This is very dangerous. It is the same with Guatemalans now."

"In religion, the majority (of Mexicans) are still Catholic, but now they are going to other religions, especially in the recent years. They complain that Guatemalans do not discipline their children in church."

"In education, the majority of Mexicans think it is important going to school and they go. Some drop out. Of the ones that finish high school, go to college. Of the ones that do not go, went into agriculture or other things."

"Mexicans that finish college do not come back to Indiantown. The town has not too much to offer. I have been here all my life. There is difference, more men finish school; some women get married."

Guatemalans. "With Guatemalans it is different. There are ones that get along well, but others do not want to change. Many of them do not speak Spanish, and that makes things difficult. Without communication it is quite difficult to get along well. I have been working four years in health programs, and I remember the case of that guy who got worse because he was rubbing the pills against his skin instead of swallowing them."

"They have not made enough effort to learn English. They have many problems because of that. My husband, for example, was not able to speak English, but he learned."

"In the last years the situation has not improved. Guatemalans do not have respect for other people. They do not discipline their children. I do not know why they do not live better, in single family houses. They have no privacy. They have to share the kitchen with three other women, and even they have to mark the milk."

"I respect very much Guatemalan women. They are so strong and quiet to accept bad situations in life. And the trips they make to come here. They are really strong people. That is wonderful. Also they take very good care of their children."

"Even Guatemalans leaders have hard times because of that (the overflow, and the way many Guatemalans behave). Jairo, for example. But it is sad that these things happen. These are good people. But it is difficult to get along. The main fact is education. Those leaders have better education."

"It is positive that there are organizations like Corn Maya, where they can get together and talk about their problems. Another thing is that Guatemalans should not have so many children. I only have two children. It is difficult to have more children. I guess they live day by day, not thinking in the future."

Eucario and Dolores Bermúdez' perspective of life is quite different because they have the experience of living in Mexico and also in some places in the United States, working in many tasks, from farm workers to having trucks and working in the cooperative. They get along well with Guatemalans.

They have an extended family, with their children and grandchildren.

Ethnic groups. "I have many Guatemalans friends, is that they come here when they have problems. I lend them money and even counsel them about personal problems. They take out their hats to salute me. I get satisfaction from that. Almost all know me (several examples)." Dolores jumped in the conversation to state that it is true and how



they have helped many people (Don Eucario relates the case of a Guatemalan crew leader that was asking money to help Guatemalans to keep their jobs when they go back to Guatemala. But when they return he fires them and gives the job to another guy to ask for more money).

Guatemalans. Don (see glossary) Eucario states that all the people who came from Guatemala were attracted by the name of the town, more than anything else. "They are Indians and speak dialects, and in Mexico the ones that speak in dialects are Indians. "

"The price of the houses is double in Los Angeles than in Indiantown. Big cities are very dangerous. For small families with growing children is better to be isolated from big cities."

Even when I pointed out that there are not many new houses in town, and that perhaps that means people from other places are coming to work in the new factories, they were ready to say that there are not many new houses yet, but good work. Another fact they point out is that almost all the new people in town are Hispanic. "So, the town is going to be a town of Indians, because all of us are really Indians (laughs)."

Community. The couple states that Indiantown is progressing very quickly. The following are some of the issues that show the progress:

1. All the roads are fixed.

2. The energy plant that gives electricity even to Miami is almost concluded. In the last year there has been a lot of construction there. They are hiring some Mexicans and Guatemalans. *Don Eucario y doña* (see glossary) Dolores had a little argument about age and what each knows of the new plant. They conclude that now there are three energy generators.
3. There is a new roofing tile plant. It was not here when you came before. And a new flower plant. And one chicken packing plant.
4. There is a new big gas station, with a store.
5. The library is new. Remember the little trailer that was used as library? Now we have this beautiful building (they were referring in fact to a new big house that it is now the library (see Figure P-6); it is beautiful and well equipped).
6. The Civic Center. They fixed and enhanced it very much. And also they are going to build a gas plant to take advantage of the citrus garbage.

Indeed, my friends Eucario and Dolores have an optimistic approach to life, and are optimistic about Indiantown, their town.

### The Maya Perspective

Currently (1994) there are at least three main nets of authority and organization among the Mayans in Indiantown

with influence in West Palm Beach. One group is connected with the Catholic Church. The other is more Mayan and secular, and the third and newest one, is mainly composed of *ladinos* (see glossary)

The leaders are really brokers. Of course, there are variations in their way of thinking about past events and their integration to Indiantown. Some, like Jairo Cantor, have partially adopted the ideas of the whites in respect to the education and "civilization" of the immigrants. Others, like Mario, are increasingly conscious of the need to know the system, and how to take advantage of it. Some also recognize that is necessary to change the role of patronizing the Mayans and other immigrants. But they do not consider the "American Way of Life" as superior, nor deny the use of the Mayan language or the traditional costumes. Many leaders in West Palm Beach, as shown later in this text, are *ladinos*. They do not speak Mayan languages.

Jairo Cantor came to the Holy Cross Center because Father Frank asked him to come, in 1985. "I had to solve all kinds of problems, related to immigration, family, economic, and whatever."

"When I arrived, there were already the Blue, White, and Yellow Camps. The Blue Camp was mainly occupied by Mexicans, and now is only Guatemalans. The White Camp was

mixed between Guatemalans and Mexicans, now almost only Guatemalans; in the Yellow there were only Guatemalans."

"The Yellow Camp was demolished because it did not comply with the county regulations. There were many claims of the residents about the trash dropped by Mayans. But they went to other places in the same street."

"When the amnesty (IRCA 1986) arrived, we did not believe that. It sounded too good to be true. But we also worked in that. We filled like 800 applications. It was under the 90 days program."

"There are a few companies that get most of the Guatemalan labor, because they said we were quiet, we do not complain, hard workers. Mainly because they could and can take advantage of us. The biggest employer was Mecca Farms, they employed many people in Boynton Beach, Jupiter, and other places. Even now they hire people without papers, taking advantage of them, of course. And other ones, like Dubois in Boynton, and others in West Palm Beach. Most people were there."

"Until recently people started to go to other places. The most appealing jobs are in golf courses. Nurseries. They have not diversified too much. What has happened is that many that have green cards have improved like drivers or crew leaders, buying a van and taking people to work."

"Now, the people who go to the labor center are not really diversifying, just doing menial jobs, not really

working in construction but grabbing things, cleaning the messes. They are not really carpenters; they do not know the system, the measures."

Ethnic groups. "But not anything is as bad as it is shown in the papers. There was a time when it was a bad campaign against us, showing pictures of Guatemalans going drunk to the houses of the Americans, destroying things. But this is only a partial aspect, and not of all people. "

"I am like in the middle, because I understand what the Americans are saying, but I also understand my people's situation. As I understand the three languages, when they are talking about my people I feel concerned but also because I understand why they are behaving like that. What we need to do is to sit down and talk of what is needed to do, to be in agreement of doing certain things, make campaigns to clean the streets of the neighborhood."

"When I arrived, the only oasis to help immigrants was the Holy Cross Center. To really get an integration of the different groups here is very difficult because this is a capitalist system, a country of competition, and all the other groups felt and feel they are better than Guatemalans. Guatemalans are considered in the last position of the social scale. In the school we are trying to know other cultures, so if we are not going to be great friends, at least to respect each other. I think that great projects do

not work. We need to impulse practical small projects that really work."

Guatemalans. "There is opposition to going to the school by some conservative Guatemalans. They think that in school people forget the cultural elements and get bad behavior, they learn to lie, to steal, to get into politics. Here is different, they realize that although they are not going to learn English, their children should and will."

"The spread of people over the region has to be for looking for the work, because there is not work in Indiantown. This is just a center of resources and to live. Also because they feel more protected here. Or perhaps for reasons of language and education."

"At that time (1985) there were less problems with the legal situation. A person just has to get a social security number, and it was all. The boss knew it was fake but he did not care. All he wanted was the labor force. But people started to apply for political asylum."

"People are improving. At least they are feeding themselves better. Compared with what they had in Guatemala. In Guatemala they had eight children, five died of malnutrition. Here they are with the face dirty but well fed. If they have eight children, the eight remain alive. They do not have any birth control. They have cars, TV, VCR, good beds, although there are things they have to improve. "

Main problems. "The main problems of that time -I made a list at that time (1985) are mainly the same ones now."

The following is Jairo's list:

1. The English language. There are some that are studying but proportionally they are very few.
2. Not knowing the rules of life and how to drive a car, for example.
3. Drunkenness. Many things that we brought from Guatemala. The lack of education, because we were there in the last place of the society. Even people that come from cities have to learn many things here. It is difficult for them to get accustomed to the level of the United States, let alone the people who are here that come mainly from villages. It is hard to get accustomed to electricity, water, cars, and live in a closed apartment, the van, the bike. It is a violent thing. Many people say they have learned nothing. It is not true. What they do not learn in 20 years in Guatemala they have to learn here in one or two."

Jairo continues his explanation "Children of typical immigrants perhaps are continuing doing things like in Huehuetenango. Girls getting married too young, boys going to work at 15. They are not studying but working. It is also that the educational system does not properly fit their needs; children get bored listening to teachers they do not understand and also the appeal of going to work. And mainly

that parents still do not understand the importance of education. Very few of the children finish high school, two of three each year. The critical period is the change to middle school, for biological reasons and the shock with education system. So, instead of delaying the process of marrying until they get a little bit better education, they prefer to do like in the town or the village and get married."

"In housing, the difference is that people are buying houses, but also the response is that the prices are going up. They are selling us old houses, in bad conditions and high prices. As if they were city houses, of Stuart or so. The other thing is that we are not well accepted. Some whites do not like Guatemalan behavior, children running around; sometimes there is garbage, sometimes there are problems of drunkenness."

"What we can do is to try to educate people so they change and will be more clean, have more order, to show that we are able to start a life in this country. People are hard workers, honest, the only thing is that they have not had is education. Our people are not thinking of receiving things, gifts, but of working."

Community. "Guatemalans are a community, because we have certain strings that put us together--the language, the religion, some holidays, places of encounter. Yes, we have many things that perhaps do not please Americans, but we



have at least some kind of organization, of unity, compared with Mexicans who never get together, not even for the Virgin of Guadalupe, perhaps they come from so many places, or perhaps Guatemala is a small country, most of us are Indians, and the other groups are not really significant, because the strength of the Guatemalans is also because of the number. Sports events are very good places of reunion."

Organizations. "It is important to think what are we really doing for people. Still, we need to fill the same money orders, they have not learn to read, not even in Spanish. So we are not really fulfilling our goals. People have the same needs. (Here Jairo explains in detail the project of the family gardens at New Hope School, and then about Alcoholic Anonymous)."

"Perhaps we have been patronized by people. We should be helped but not considered victims and poor little people all our life. The most important thing is to help people to get educated, so that they fight for themselves. But this system also provides some things than can make people depend on them and not improve, programs that give food stamps, the WIC program. And some percentage of Guatemalans are now depending on them. In the long run, this can make people passive and with low self-esteem."

### The Brokers

The role of the brokers is well known in anthropology. In Indiantown and West Palm Beach there are two kinds of brokers. One is the outsiders, whites, priests, and in West Palm Beach other Hispanics like Teresa Torres, Luisa Lara, and Cubans in Centro Guatemalteco. The second is the insiders, *ladinos* (see glossary) and Mayans.

In Indiantown, some whites and religious persons have played an important role. Pamela, a nun, has been in a privileged position to watch and analyze what has happened in the town and the county.

Pamela started her recollection from the time in 1983 when the Kanjobales arrived at Indiantown. "In 1984 and 1985 all of them were from San Miguel, Huehuetenango. In 1986 there was more of a mixture, with people from other tribes from Guatemala. And also in that year (1986) came the new law. It meant a great change in Indiantown. People with papers do not have to remain in the same job but they can move to permanent jobs with better payment. For families, that means better possibilities for the children at school, and also stability and the possibility of reunion. Many have gone to Guatemala to bring their families."

"At the beginning the people from Guatemala were from San Miguel. I did a census in 1984 of 173 Migueleños in Indiantown. They are the more backward; the others have a

little more education. They came for political persecution, they came from the fifth hell, but you can notice they lack any kind of civilization. For example, the first year all 173 Migueleños get chicken pox, and they get then *sarampion*, and then . . . penicillin is not working in them because they have not been exposed to those diseases, so they have to have several treatments. So, they were really Indians. The health department and we have to cope with the situation."

"In 1984, all the people in Yellow Camp get infected with *sarna* (mange), and we also have to fix the situation. Cochise brought medical doctors from Miami."

"The fact that the families are here was what made them look for a place to live and to think of the possibility of buying a house. And that has meant that all the town is trembling of fear, because before neither Mexicans nor Guatemalans have bought houses. And then they tried by all means to stop the inhabitants of Indiantown. Happily, most of the ones that have bought houses are taking good care of them and giving a good example. It was in 1986-1989. But after that in 1989-1991 they have bought houses only for business purposes, renting them to too many people, being abusive, charging too much for the rent. They have been abusive with their own people. It has not being well accepted by town people."

"Then, in 1990 whites tried to stop that Guatemalans buy houses, but thank god, they have not been able to pass any law, because the land belongs to all of us. But the town people have realized that immigrants have to live here, still there are some of them that say I do not want to get mixed up with those people, I am going to sell my house, and they are selling them. I think in a while Indiantown will be like Immokolee, with a few whites, being a town of immigrants."

Ethnic groups. "There are two kinds of whites here in Indiantown. The educated whites that have worked in Pratt - Whitney factory and the whites that worked in the fields, commonly known as 'rednecks' or 'hillbillies.' They do not have any education. There are whites whose education is worse than the Guatemalans, that do not have any formal education, but the Guatemalans have traditional education from the community, and there are whites that do not have even that kind of thing."

"The blacks are in a category of poverty and lack of education, discrimination. About Haitians, they are a mixture, ones than come educated and those who came in the boats, but we do not have many of those; the ones here are the same from the beginning, I know them. There are about 26 families. Mexicans, they are the ones who are here since many years ago and they came alone; then after '86 they brought their families, and they are reunited now. But

there is also a group of young illegal Mexicans that were willing to take the risk and have come with their families from the beginning, and after 1986 they get the papers and now they are fine in Indiantown."

"Between Mexicans and Chicanos, the difference is that Chicanos are more complex, they demand more, they like charity. Traditions of Mexicans are so great, they behave and have wonderful models. Now the problem with Chicanos, and perhaps the same with Puerto Ricans, is that they do not know who they really are. If they are Mexicans or Americans--it is a problem of identity. And perhaps blacks have the same problem. They do not who they are."

"Guatemalans have been getting along well with Mexicans mainly. One Guatemalan man married a Mexican woman; there was also a Guatemalan woman with a Mexican guy, but it did not work. I do not know of any whites marrying Mexicans or Guatemalans in Indiantown. When the head of the house is a Mexican and there are Guatemalans living there, it has worked well."

Guatemalans. "There is still the mentality of lone men that come here to work for the season. For some it is convenient to leave the wife for seven months taking care of the children and without any responsibility besides making money. I am worried because perhaps we are going to have the same thing with the Guatemalans, of the seasonal worker.

I respect the ones that are reunify with their families; the ones that are alone, may get vicious."

Main problems. "About education, the main issue is that education is changing in all the United States. And the immigrants who have the need for education go to Hope Rural School, which gives them a kind of education that is confronting the daily needs of the immigrants. Adult education is of the worst quality in Indiantown, the one for the immigrants, but fortunately they are changing the director, and the new one has compromised to help the immigrants. Here we are giving a sewing machine class on Saturdays, with a teacher paid by adult education."

"In housing, it was the Mexicans who led the way to buy houses and Guatemalans followed them; Haitians are not buying, I do not know of any cases. Blacks are buying, and for whites, the 'hillbillies' of Indiantown, they want to buy but they have no money or stable jobs. The other ones are the owners of the town. The thing is that if you have money in this county, you make the laws of the county."

"Housing is the main problem of Indiantown. There is a 1965 law in respect to housing, it is a county law. The meeting we are going to have this weekend (June 1993) is for that, to study that. As they did not know of the overflow of people coming here from other countries, now the county is overcrowded. It is not the number of people but the pressure on health facilities, schools. So, all of these

things have to be faced, and the laws renewed. Mainly, the population has grown steadily in the 1970s and 1980s. The population has grown like three times from 1970 to 1980, and the same thing from 1980 to 1990."

"The land that is free is being purchased for agriculture and to build big enterprises like the energy plant. Why? Because the county asks for this permit, this license, and all that means time and money, and this is nothing for big business, but if you want to build a house, \$5,000 for just permits is too much for you. So, now is a problem of updating."

"The housing situation now is worse than before. To give you an idea, if one house is worth \$54,000 in Indiantown, it is worth \$500,000 in Jupiter, because they have the money. But my argument for the owners of the county is if they want somebody to pick up the oranges, if they want workers for the golf courses, for construction, and for the maintenance of the house of \$500,000, they have to provide something for the workers in Indiantown."

"For blacks, drugs is number one problem. And it is a problem for Guatemalans too; they have been robbed and assaulted. A few of them are involved in the business--very few. (Pamela tells the case of a guy who was in jail and a drug dealer paid the bond)."

Community. "Indiantown is a community; it is organized, but Mexicans and Guatemalans have not even found out how it is organized. There are three meetings yearly where we discuss all the matters of the town, in the Chamber of Commerce. The town has made all kind of efforts to appeal them, to attract them, but they do not come, they behave like living in a small town. I guess it is lack of education, of have living in a big town, and the other thing is the lack of English."

"Mexicans are learning more English, and they use the service for finding jobs in the Chamber of Commerce. Also, they are hiring more Mexicans in the energy plant. But there are also some Guatemalans working there, for example, Jose Martin. He is very active and now he is working in the energy plant, and also his son. But if they stay in their very small group, they are not going to improve. Guatemalans are too much closed. But they have to enhance their world."

"I also see that Indiantown is coming to relate more with the whole county, because from here is coming the labor force for the county. That does not happen in Port Salerno, or Saint Lucy, or Jupiter. From here is where the people are going to the other places to work."

Work. "Before, when they had no papers (the Mayans), they did not go away far from Indiantown, but now they are going to other places, working in construction, in golf



courses, at the beach, and travel between cities. But it also means that the ones that were picking up oranges--that were in Mexican hands--so, Guatemalans have go out of the oranges to more convenient jobs, because oranges are seasonal. And, the places of the Guatemalans are being occupied by new illegal immigrants from other places, some Mexicans, some Guatemalans, but also Cubans, Nicaraguans, Salvadorans, Haitians, blacks."

"Vegetables are almost exclusively a Guatemalan labor. In flowers (nursery) are Mexicans and Guatemalans. Golf courses belong to Mexicans and Guatemalans. Haitians go the oranges now and to the sugar cane. So, the ones that were working here before have gone to more permanent jobs, and those places are taken by new people coming."

"Also, there are different cycles. In oranges it is only two or three months; in vegetables they work more, seven to eight months, flowers from six to eight months, but golf courses are all year; construction, it depends--now it is good."

"There is a competition for resources between immigrants, but mainly is an individual matter. There are a lot of people going to learn English, the ones working in golf courses, they have learned a lot, because the bosses speak in English. So, working in the golf courses means they have a permanent job, they learn English, and they are the ones that are improving, buying houses, and all those

things. It is a chain reaction. Another thing is that in the golf, Mexicans and Guatemalans come along very well, they are able to work together very well."

Religion. "Religion is related to interests. Because the Catholic Church is not doing as much as before, those other cults, that were not here before, have grown a lot. It would be different if Father Frank were here. In the last four years it is incredible how they (the other churches) have grown. It is also because there they pay more attention to individuals, because they tell people what to do on a daily basis. And it was like that before with Father Frank and the nuns that were here at the beginning, who did a lot of activities with the people at that time."

#### The Blooming of Organizations in West Palm Beach

Corn Maya was the first Maya organization in South Florida. This nonprofit organization was created in 1983, by Jerónimo Camposeco and anthropologists Shelton Davis and Allan Burns to start supporting the Mayans in the presentation of their asylum cases to the I.N.S.

Now, there are two Mayan organizations, Corn Maya in Indiantown and Maya Quetzal in West Palm Beach. In Palm Beach county there is also the Guatemalan Center, and several other places that provide support for Mayans, other Guatemalans, and Hispanics, like Latin American Information

Referral Office (LAIRO) and Migrant Worker Society. This former one is the agency of Teresa Torres.

### A Myriad of Opinions

In Indiantown the different opinions are shaped in the different personalities and personal stories, but are also influenced by class, education, and profession differences. Additionally, political and ethnic positions are also main issues in the way people perceive the situation of the immigrants in West Palm Beach, and in what and how things should be done.

Thus, the diversification in the ethnic composition of Guatemalans, that now include Mayans from different places besides Huehuetenango, and *ladinos* (see glossary), is reflected also in the organizations that now are trying several life strategies, different from the resistance (see Chapter Six), mainly used by Mayans.

As one of the Mayans says, the life in a small town of 10,000 people, like Indiantown, is different from life in a big and spread-out city like West Palm Beach.

It is interesting to note that some of the positions of the academy are paralleled here in terms of integration, adaptation, or assimilation.

Margarita Avellaneda (see her narrative below) considers that it has been an error to work only for the people of one country, Cubans, Guatemalans, or a section or

ethnic group, like the Mayans. Thus, from this position, all Hispanic people in need should be considered equal and receive the same treatment regardless of nationality. Although it is necessary to overcome the groupism, it is also true that not all Hispanic people receive the same treatment in the United States, or have the same political or economic status. Margarita's complaint that some funds are tied to groups that sometimes do not even use them is fair, but at the same time the creation of those funds was a way to compensate for these groups being at a clear disadvantage.

After several years of work with the immigrants, the agencies also are trying to overcome the patronizing scheme of simply giving things. They realize that it is not good for immigrants nor for agencies.

It seems that in going to this more complex situation in West Palm Beach, the creation of several and very different organizations was a necessity. At the same time, the leaders and people working in the organizations are learning many things and been able of overcome the shortcomings. These are some of the points of view.

One organization can be just for the people of the ethnic group, as it has been with Corn Maya, or can be with the support of professional staff like LAIRO, or the Centro Guatemalteco. Still, there are differences because in many

cases they are not really professionals but people improvised in that position.

Opportunism is also an issue about which Mayans are increasingly aware. Many discovered that the self-named "lawyers" of Miami are really making the same statement for all the asylum cases, and charging up four times the money real lawyers do. Self-appointed supporters of Mayans, like Teresa Torres, also are said to really be taking advantage of the Mayans, using federal funds while also charging the immigrants for the services. That also could be truth, but in any case is indicative of the need for somebody to provide the services she is doing.

The *ladino* (see glossary) perspective is also quite different from the Mayan point of view. In general, it seems that ladinos are more inclined to settle in West Palm Beach and become more assimilated to the "American Way of Life," but there is also a recognition that Indiantown is the town of Mayans. As Maria Alonso says, "Indiantown works like a town of reference. It is like it is our towns in Guatemala." The situation is a paradox, because in Guatemala *ladinos* consider themselves advocates of Indians (Jafek 1992); here they have been led by the Mayans.

Some of the reflections of the leaders also include the influence of the workers back in the homeland, the differences in characteristics and behavior between the

waves of immigrants, and how they complete circles while working in South Florida.

### A Puerto Rican Perspective

Teresa Torres. I met Teresa Torres at the Hispanic Board Meeting in downtown West Palm Beach. There, although two Guatemalan leaders were present, it was Teresa, a Puerto Rican, who talked about Guatemalans and how she was helping them. Actually, she was seated in the panel of the speakers that day.

According to her, she is a benefactor of Guatemalans, the "mother" of them, and even has problems with her family because of her dedication to Guatemalans. She says she does that because has the satisfaction of their improvement.

The interview was done at her office in West Palm Beach. The place is one of the cores of the Guatemalans immigrants in West Palm Beach. When I arrived, a Guatemalan boy at the door asked me if my matter was interesting (the word he used), because Doña Virginia had told him only to introduce to her people with important matters. The house was very dirty (papers, cans, and many objects on the floor) and with a very bad odor, as if it had been used and lived in for several days like it was. The couch that was offered to me was so dirty that I hesitated about sitting on that trash. And although she received me with courtesy, she was very rude with the Guatemalans.

History. "I was working as a seamstress, although I studied psychology at the University of Chicago too. I started helping with one family, then two, and so on. Then, it become too much for a person, so I hired my daughter."

"I formed the organization Migrant Worker Society in 1990, with the support of the people, and the government of the United States."

Guatemalans. "Guatemalans number 7,000 or 8,000 in the West Palm Beach area. In Indiantown there are more, but many are dispersing. It is because they are dependent on their relatives at the beginning, but as soon as they start improving they move to other places."

"I made meetings with the police, the drivers school, and other agencies so they learn there are other means in life. The police says I am like the mother of the Guatemalans."

"In this building I have a lot of people who are living here, mainly people that do not have other places to go."

"Special about Guatemalans, compared with other Latinos, is that they are willing to endure hard things but at the same time they do not feel like United States has opened its doors but they do not feel like they are at home. It calls for discrimination against them. They are seen like poor people, how they live, their dressing way. In this country it is very difficult to accept that things exist here. So, I have being showing to the community that

these things exist here. There are landlords that are taking advantage of them. They are modest and do not know how to fight back."

"They are very isolated from other groups; that makes them different. But they are willing to relate to other groups. It is more like for one reason or other they feel isolated. They feel shy. It came as a surprise that they have accepted me. They do not trust people easily. If somebody who is not Guatemalan comes here and wants to talk to them, they look at me like asking for authorization. If I say yes, he is a good guy, then they talk, otherwise not. It is not easy to gain their trust."

Main problems. "Recently, a man died of AIDS. He had a family here but he went to the north, and after coming was diagnosed and went back to Guatemala, where he died one month after."

"Main needs are orientation, education. The main point is to make them conscious that they have rights. It was a great problem when I started because the immigration came and break into the houses and harass the people without any authorization. Now, they are aware that they do not have to say nothing. But they need direct orientation, not only general, especially for claiming their rights. She relates the case of a guy who only speaks 'dialect' and was able to get a driver's license. He learned how to manage with WIC coupons for children, we put their children at school, his



pregnant woman got medical attention, food coupons for family."

### A Cuban Perspective

Luisa Lara. The interview was done at the office of Centro Guatemalteco where Luisa were working. It is located in Lake Worth.

History. "The origin of Centro Guatemalteco was in the interest Father Frank has to help the Guatemalans, because he loves them so much and other groups of persons when he was working at the St. Ignatius Cathedral have being teaching English and doing other things, helping with immigrant papers. It was a voluntary work, very informal. Then they applied for some funds, like to the Children Service Council, that exists from 1987; it get funds from the county. The application was made for Guatemalan children, for prenatal care. Because here you go to the hospital, not when you are going to die, like in Guatemala, but for prevention."

"The center was opened on May 6 of 1992, one year ago. From May to September it was working a woman who is not Guatemalan but Peruvian and me. And from October all the employees but me are Guatemalans. We have three ladies who are the ones that are with the people, going to different places with them, and a boy who drives the van, and he is also Guatemalan."

"We have a tutoring program for kids who have recently arrived from Guatemala. Besides normal school they need tutoring for the language and other issues to integrate to the system."

"We are a nonprofit organization that gets the funds from the Council and do not charge for the services. The chairman is Father Frank. There are seven Guatemalans and five non-Guatemalans on the board. We have seven committees, including education (English classes, tutoring), health (prevention), immigration issues, public relations (holy day celebrations), culture (marimba), and others, in order to present a good image of the people."

Main problems. "Housing is the biggest problem. We have things for health, immigration, education. But the problem of education is huge and we do not have any solution. There is the overcrowding. It is not only for the Guatemalans, also Mexicans, Salvadorans, all. And it is very sad, because they are so hard workers, so good people. They are doing the work nobody wants to do, and all they want is to live in peace."

Organizations. "The philosophy of the center is to provide service but special service, but at the same time to create community--the service we give to somebody he will pass it to other person. We have a very good net of people who help us--lawyers, for example."

The future. "The center is open to anybody who wants to cooperate or needs a service. Not only Catholic, although the chair is a priest. This thing is going to grow, it is the main issue. And it is good also for Palm Beach County. We have very good relations with other organizations for Guatemalans. But, I do not know them really. I know they did many things when a boy died in 1991. I tried to make the other older resident Hispanics aware of the importance of having the Guatemalans here and how positive they are."

#### A Latin Perspective

Margarita Avellaneda is the director of LAIRO. She said that Hispanics in Palm Beach county numbered around 17,000, but that there are no statistics of how many Guatemalans there are."

"Now, there is this fashion of studying and helping the Mayas: *los Mayas se pusieron más de moda que Maddona*, and also the farm workers. There is no directory of Hispanic or Latin agencies. **El Recurso** is a list that can be useful."

History. "LAIRO was founded in 1987, with a holistic perspective, trying to work for a broader range of Hispanics besides Cubans. In order to work with the latinos. It got the nonprofit status in 1989, but we really started in 1990. Centro Guatemalteco is more recent and has more budget."

"LAIRO provides services to everybody who asks for it. But our grants are for specific things. Children's Service

Council, this program is for children. The assistant is trilingual, she speaks Kanjobal, Spanish and English, and many of our clients are Mayans. This is like 80% of our activity. Then, we have what we call "Community Education." I have a monthly program on the radio, to talk to the community about these issues we are talking about. We also do workshops for the community, about education, housing, work, the rights of the renters. And we have also mental counsel, for families."

"We have also two special programs: Education and prevention about AIDS, and one group of support for patients with HIV virus. And a tutoring program for children, to support them because they are behind, because of the language or whatever. They are in courses they should not be in. We also have programs of immigration and referral."

U.S. system and ethnic groups. "The bigger groups are Cubans, then Mexicans. Now Guatemalans are almost even with Mexicans. Mexicans are clear in that they want to go back to Mexico. Guatemalans do not say what they really want. Now, Guatemalans who have papers are traveling a lot. And they are buying houses and businesses. It is like a sub-economy. It depends a lot on where they come from. People coming from a past of persecution perhaps are not going back."

"A Colombian can be Hispanic but in the last resort. The first thing is the nationality and to be *latino*. The

national labels can be an obstacle to work with them. When people arrive here, even if they have never been together they help each other if they are from the same town or state."

"For me it has been an error to work only for a section of a province or a country, only for the Kanjobales, or the Mayas, or the Guatemalans. It does not matter where you come from. We share the same problems--immigration and so on--that should put us in the same boat. But we are not in the same boat."

"Fortunately, the Guatemalan leaders are becoming conscious that it is necessary to overcome the groupism in order to achieve some thing. There are problems already, differences and antagonism between the organizations."

"The other main force is the political frame with the influence of the United States in our countries, that increases our problems and make people to come here. So, when people is here, they have the right to be here. I see it like that, like a *latino* thing."

"It is a paradox that for each dollar the immigrants receive, 65 cents are already taken in the form of taxes, and one part goes to the army of Guatemala or other countries in the form of weapons that contribute to the climate of violence and the murders that are causing people to come here."

"People think they do not have rights. It is not only with the Guatemalans, it is the same with Mexicans, Salvadorans, and all the *latino* countries. But if I think they have the right to stay, at the same time I consider that they should go back to their homeland. The economic situation is good, but culturally they never will be well treated, because of this Hispanic label."

"Other labels like refugees are also an impediment to work to them, because it is a political label. So in many programs or agencies, it is possible to work only with Cubans."

Guatemalans. "The problem many times is that they do not know that they are oppressed. I think Guatemalans are in a period of transition, of dilemma, **In Purgatory**."

"There are many Guatemalans that are coming now. They are living in horrible conditions. They complain a lot, especially the women, because there, in their homeland, they did not have to pay rent or utilities. The only good thing they see is that here they can wash clothes by machine, not by hand, but for the rest of the things they think they were better in Guatemala."

Main problems. "Living conditions are horrible in Lake Worth. The difference between West Palm Beach and Lake Worth is that in West Palm Beach live many single guys and there is a lot of prostitution and venereal diseases, some cases of AIDS, while in Lake Worth are more families. But

the houses are so dilapidated that are in danger of falling over them."

"Other problem is that the rest of the people are passive, because we do not trust politics, we have the tendency of stay out of political business because of our past without democracy, in our countries. The other important issue is that most of the people are not legal, or only residents, and cannot participate fully in politics: They are semi-legal. This is very important, because the apathy is enormous. The Mexican only wants to buy his house in Mexico, and really does not care about politics here."

Organizations. "It is a bad symptom that there is tension, conflict between the groups that work with Hispanics instead of cooperation, instead of working like a coalition. It should not be different because of the nationality of the client who needs a service. It is also because people working for some agencies are not professionals, do not have any formation for that, so it is not possible to talk with them like colleagues."

"Another problem is that in some cases it is not clear the philosophy of the groups. Or it is almost antagonistic. For example, if one group is under the influence of the ideology of the Catholic Church, and they pretend that one campaign against AIDS is doing without talking about condoms and sexual life, it is impossible. Furthermore, it is LAIRO philosophy to be with the person so he/she can be conscious

of his/her position in this society. To work with people, not for the people. But in other agencies the philosophy is to give things, charity, and keep them ignorant and under control. There is a lot of patronizing. Our job is to educate people, not just to do things for them."

"Out of necessity, organizations must and will come together in some way. We will have to behave like a family with fights, but together."

The Hispanic Board. "The commissioners all are Cubans. They do not represent the community. They do not communicate with the community and do nothing for it. They are arrogant and think they are the only ones with rights and Cuba is the only place where there are violations of human rights. The bad thing is that political representation is manipulated and monopolized by Cubans."

#### Guatemalan Perspective

Maria Alonso is a trilingual worker at the *Centro Guatemalteco*. She has been working in advocacy programs for several years.

United States system and ethnic groups. "People who are staying here are the ones who understand the need for adapting to the system, and that it is necessary to accept the rules here. To have a drivers license, for example, and to get their own car, because things here are not like in our countries."



"It is beautiful that people are able to do that, to settle down here, because we Guatemalans are traveling all the time, moving around. Indiantown works like a town of reference. It is like it was our towns in Guatemala. It is a home also for the new waves of immigrants. Even if people move north, they come back here and stay here. People put children at school, then we get our own house, not rented, and the children grow up. Even the people from the villages are doing the same. They have learned a little of English."

Guatemalans. "When I go to the Blue Camp I notice that the people there are new. New immigrants, they complete a cycle. They move to other parts. Especially, people look for their housing, many under the influence of the IHRS (to pay less taxes), others under their own decision. Anyway, they realize it is not a good thing that children live in the same house with all the single men from other villages. Most of the ones who left Indiantown come to Lake Worth (this agrees with Margarita Avellaneda's reference that families go to Lake Worth). At that time (1988) everybody knew everybody else. All were from the west, from Huehuetenango; everybody spoke Kanjobal."

"I have spoken with many mothers; we have had meetings here. Even if they are peasants, they speak beautifully of Guatemala. In Guatemala we had to learn to stay with our uncles or grandparents if our parents had to leave."

"Youngsters become adapted more to the fashion here, in the haircuts, earrings, clothes. And also changes in religion--they do not follow so closely to the traditional rituals. They feel a lot of freedom. There are many opportunities here. But the older generation still thinks according to the old traditions. We have been nomads, but now this is our town (Indiantown)."

Education. "There are two groups of immigrants. The ones who fled from Guatemala that now are going to remain here. And the ones to come here for economic reasons and that are not going to stay. They are not interested in studying English, in adapting to society, because they know they have a country that is waiting for them. But many times, they get accustomed and stay here. Most people, however, are not thinking of going back to Guatemala. They also are changing their minds about the education of the children."

Influence of immigrants in homeland. "Some people came on a temporary basis, in the beginning sending money to their families in Guatemala. Then after deciding to stay here, they give their land and improvements in the village to the family there. The people there share the house or the farm with the family, never charge a rent or something like that. The older people have more feelings of brotherhood, and are always thinking in family ways. With the young people is different. The youngest have deserted

the *Patrulla Civil* (see glossary) or the army. They have not gone to the coast; they do not have to work so hard as we did. They come directly here. The towns have also changed a lot. In San Miguel, for example, there is a lot more food and wealth."

Organizations. "Organizations that exist are not perfect but it is better than nothing. People stay together, find jobs in the same place to be together, and moves to Lake Worth or Jupiter to remain together with the people of the same place in Guatemala. Many are exploited by Americans but at the same time they feel appreciated by their bosses, something that rarely happened in Guatemala."

Oscar García. As presented in Chapter One, Oscar would be considered a *ladino* in Guatemala. He is a young leader of the Guatemalans in West Palm Beach.

Story. "Before our organization (Maya Quetzal) became legal (in May 1993), we did things, but we did not feel self-confident about what we were doing; now hopefully everything will be different. The organization started to help people. We started when a boy died here and we started to gather money to send the body to Guatemala (Oscar refers to the accident of 1991, presented in this dissertation). And we sent the body and some money to help the family over there."

U.S. system and ethnic groups. "Some days ago a Guatemalan was killed over here. If it would be a Cuban, I

am sure they would scream and protest, but Guatemalans only asked how did he died, and details like that. All they said was 'poor guy.' The Cubans make the others respect them, but we do not. I think it is because there is not an organization that stands up for us. We fear, for example, that there may be a massive deportation. But I think that we have the right to be here, that the United States and any country should give asylum to who needs it, as long as the person behaves properly and is not a robber or delinquent. In that case they do not have the right to stay."

Main problems. "Guatemalans do not learn English because they work with Hispanics. At the beginning when one is learning the first words of English one feels like a stupid."

"A very important thing is recreation. Many times people drink because they do not have anything more to do. But there are many boys that like to play soccer. And will be a good thing to go to Disney World, and other good places, for example."

"Sexual issues are also something that people are looking for. But there is a lot of prostitution here in Broadway Avenue and in other places, and some cases of AIDS. This is related to the drinking problem. People start drinking and then make love with whatever prostitute and get many venereal diseases and AIDS."

Community and organizations. "I have always liked to work for Guatemalans because I understand how it is at the beginning; it is very hard, so I can help the people as somebody did with me before. For me it is not correct that if I know how to do something I charge a countryman for doing that. For me it is to take advantage of our own people."

"The problem of the organizations is that if somebody is an employee, the other guys think they have to do nothing, and the person becomes sacrificed. (The question is why organizations like LAIRO function while others do not.) That was what happened with the organization in Indiantown. Only one person was doing everything, while the other guys were doing nothing. The other thing is that many Guatemalans go north to work or go back to Guatemala, and because of that the support is unstable. But the main thing is the money to support the organization. That also happened to that organization, that the boys have to loan the money for the organization."

"The other big issue is antagonism. That one organization wants to destroy the other. Gossip between the people. It is the competition. Centro Guatemalteco fills forms for application, and also does Teresa Torres, but people prefer to go to some person that does things easily, asking them only two or three things and filling for himself the forms, because they put the same story in all

applications. And all receive the work permit, they prefer to pay \$100 to the guy to do things wrong but do not ask questions and not to the other one who do things right but takes the time and asks questions. American Friends do things right, but now they are no longer helping with the forms because they are too busy."

"There is a Mexican organization in Boynton Beach; Cristina Montenegro (a social worker) is working with them. They have become legalized right now. I think that we are too close in the matters of our country. We have being working mainly with Corn Maya and with the Lions Club of Miami Guatemala. There is a difference of class. This boys of Totonicapan (the ones who live in the Apt. 8, presented in this dissertation) talk openly and friendly with me, but if the people of the Lions Club come they become shy and do not talk. It is the same with people of other countries. People feel better and trust more their own countrymen. And I think it is better that we solve our own problems, but we still need the support from the county and from other organizations."

"The relations with other organizations and the county will depend mainly on our work, because if we do not function well, effectively, they will not trust us and will not call us for anything. On the other hand, I believe that the work with our people will develop very well, because

people will continue coming more and more. And they will need a Guatemalan organization to receive and guide them."

"Working in Indiantown is easier, but has not been successful because the people there was that at the beginning they did not work well, and people lose trust on them. We have many things, much work to do. And what we need is economic support and moral support, because without that it is impossible to do anything."

#### The Mayan Network

The network of the workers was built while they came progressively from Arizona and California to Florida. While being in the houses of Mayans, I was able to see relatives and countrymen coming and going constantly from California and Guatemala. Ladinos in West Palm Beach also have taken the initiative to contact professional Guatemalans, upper and middle class, in West Palm Beach and Miami. With the support of those professionals, they have been able to have several health and instructional journeys, both in the city and in Indiantown.

In an intent to overcome differences and work together, some leaders are trying to create a confederation of Guatemalan organizations with participation of the different Mayan and Hispanic organizations that work with Guatemalans, and the professionals of West Palm Beach and Miami. There are also efforts to create an American confederation, with

people of the *Grupo Maya Kusamej Junan*, from San Francisco, California, and organizations from other places.

It seems that in relation to the process of getting organized and being able of answer to the needs of an increasing population, both in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, Mayans and other immigrants are In Purgatory.



#### CHAPTER FOUR MAKING IT: SHELTERING AND EDUCATION

Looking from the outside, it would be fair to say that the system--the sets of laws and rules, and the management of them through bureaucracies, as well as implicit and explicit codes of behavior for work and the rest of the basic activities--is very hostile to immigrants. The INS, housing conditions and their regulations, and work conditions frankly are unfriendly to the immigrant, specially for recent arrivals. But they do not perceive these things as difficult as one might expect, because they are accustomed to be treated unfairly and to tough conditions in their homeland.

Housing is the biggest problem in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, being an arena where the incongruence between rules, plans, and reality appear most evident. Mayans are wanted as workers, not as neighbors. As some of them are buying houses, some anglos are leaving town.

By becoming legal or remaining semi-legal and living in crowded conditions in order to save money, Mayans are making it through the system, but ethnic antagonism has not diminished. Indiantown is a boiling pot. It is too soon

for them to become integrated, but in the meantime they are learning and building their own path in the area.

For the present adult generation of immigrant workers, it quickly becomes evident that the way to improve is not through education but rather through work and cultural strategies. For some white leaders and members of other ethnic groups that have patronized them, trying to educate them in the "American Way of Life," it is also clear now that Mayans are unique and very persistent in their strategies. But education is the arena where many of the generational changes of migrants can be seen, and to outsiders this is the way the Mayans still can be changed, perhaps not the present but the next generation.

In this chapter, housing and education, two of the three main issues in the way Mayans and other immigrants are "making it", are presented. In next chapter, work, the basic activity that allows Mayans and other immigrants to stay in the United States is underscored.

### The Sheltering of the Workers: The Housing

The housing situations in Indiantown are as heterogeneous as the different human groups living there. Ethnic, racial, and class segregation plays an important role in the matter. Today the town is segregated by ethnic group and also by class. But the physical pattern also is influenced by the history of the settlement of the people in

the region. Whites came at the beginning of this century and later in the twenties for the cattle and dairy operations that were the first activities in town. Later, in the fifties, a small group of people from England came to work in the book factory that was created at that time. In the sixties, more came to work in the Florida Steel Corporation, the Electric Steel Mill, and in the Pratt and Whitney Aircraft Company (Dorman 1985: 5). Recently the Energy Plant of Florida has been trying to get its workers to live in Indiantown and nearby places. Those who are successful move to the exclusive white neighborhood, while the majority live in the multi-ethnic zone.

Blacks started to come in the forties and especially in the sixties as farm workers. Almost all have been living in Booker Park. And the "aliens"--Mexicans, Haitians, and Mayans--moved first to the Blue Camp and Booker Park and to the multi-ethnic zone later.

### Physical Stratification

Indiantown has three principal residential zones. The white zone is located around the commercial with two sub-areas. Surrounding the Marina is an exclusive area with docks along the St. Lucie canal. The founders and owners of the town live there. In the other sub-zone, middle- and low-class anglos live in middle-class homes alongside

Mexicans, Mayans, and small Hispanic groups such as Puerto Ricans and Salvadorans.

The second zone is occupied by agricultural laborers such as blacks and Haitians and other minorities. It is composed of Booker Park and its surroundings, White Camp, and Yellow Camp. Blue Camp is located in Booker Park. The camps are a type of barracks comprised of one bedroom apartments where one family, or one family and single men, or up to eight single men are crammed together. Those on the first floor of Blue Camp (a two-story building, see Figure 4-1), have a few communal toilets for the whole floor. Yellow Camp's pseudonym, "Roach Palace," connotes the sanitary conditions prevalent in these camps (see recount of Pamela, in Chapter Three). The Yellow Camp was demolished in 1990 due to its deplorable situation. But for many immigrant Mayans, especially those without relatives or acquaintances in Indiantown or the West Palm Beach area, the camps are an obligatory site of arrival.

A thirty-year-old document (Ruhnke 1959) cites some of the basic problems: crowded, dilapidated houses, and terrible sanitary conditions. The latter were supported by blacks in this period. These problems are still unresolved for blacks and other ethnic groups who arrived later.

It is interesting to observe the reaction of local and regional officials upon reading this document. Whites try to prove that the situation has changed while blacks assume

the opposite position, but many blame the standstill on other ethnic minorities.

In Booker Park there is a high rate of crime--assaults, drugs, murders of Mayans, and fights. It is probably Indiantown's site of greatest ethnic antagonism. Although Mayans often cannot distinguish between Haitians and American blacks, the Mayans attribute the assaults and robberies of which they are victims to the blacks. Mayans call Haitians and blacks *moyos*.

The Mayans in Booker Park are exploited by some blacks. Blue Camps's black proprietor, who lives in Stuart, the county's capital, derives considerable income from the substandard housing units. Furthermore, he does not even go there to collect rent but instead has a Mexican administrator to do it. Some blacks take advantage of the absent proprietor's vacant lots by placing upon them shacks made out of pieces of wood and card board (see Figure 4-2), or old buses, which they later rent to immigrants for \$125 weekly. There, the housing conditions are even worse than those for the camps. In brief, the housing conditions and sanitation of the camps and Booker Park are no better than any slum of Bogotá, Bombay, or Rio. This is a flagrant violation of the county and state norms and regulations (see The Florida Atlantic University Institute of Government 1993, Martin County Growth Management Department 1989, and Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council 1987)

The other area of the town is that of Indiantown's retirees. Indianwood, as it is called, is segregated from the rest of the town and is composed of condominiums with all the commodities characteristic of the American middle class. Its proprietor is a developer who is interested in solving Indiantown's actual problems so that they won't impact the condominiums. Some Indianwood white residents do volunteer work, such as teaching English classes and helping at the health center, for the Mayans and other immigrants.

The primary complaint of whites and Mexicans regarding the Mayans is the terrible things --*barbaridades*-- they do when they get drunk, specifically, driving without a license. An article which appeared in a West Palm Beach newspaper described Indiantown's ethnic antagonism (Williams 1988). Depicting how the Mayans are considered a nuisance, the article showed that in reality, the whites who complain "go complaining towards the bank." These whites are owners of the town or business proprietors who benefit from the migrants' money. The town's owners are a few families who possess the majority of the houses and the town's properties. The aforementioned article prompted a meeting to solve some of Indiantown's problems.

A few years ago some whites, who perceived how culturally strong the Mayans are, thought that one attraction of Indiantown could be an adequate presentation of Mayans and their culture, taking advantage of the



FIGURE 4-1  
THE BLUE CAMP IN BOOKER PARK



FIGURE 4-2  
THE SHACKS IN BOOKER PARK



FIGURE 4-3  
LIVING IN BLUE CAMP



coincidence of the town name. Indiantown's name comes from the indigenous Seminoles who inhabited the region before the arrival of the whites. Presently, the Seminoles live on a reservation southeast of Indiantown.

### Laws, Rules, and Planning

Housing is increasing at a slow rate, with only 1824 units approved for the 1980-1984 period in the western part of the county where Indiantown is located. Because of the flow of labor immigrants, this is a major problem in Indiantown. Although Booker Park is considered one of the substandard housing areas, there are six more in the county. The plan also states that the normal filtering down of housing prices does not work well here because of the nature and rapidity of the population growth. This leaves the lower-income residents with no opportunity to improve their housing accommodations. However, the Housing and Community Development Act (Title I and II) provides a potential source of federal assistance for a wide range of community improvements in selected areas where substandard housing is concentrated, and the plan affirms that "such provisions may be used most effectively for the county's migrant and rural labor needs" (Martin County Commission 1985: 26-27) (emphasis mine).

In compliance with the former policy, the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council elaborated on the 1987 **Regional Comprehensive Policy Plan** (Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council 1987). The Treasure Coast Region includes Indian River County, Martin County, Palm Beach County, and St. Lucie County. One of the main relevant traits of Martin County is the large migration that amounts to 38,515 people annually, or 105 daily. The median age of residents of the region is higher than that of the state of Florida or that of the United States. This is a result of the choice of the region and the county as a place of retirement for many seniors from other parts of the country. In other traits, Martin County follows the pattern of the region. In terms of space and population (77,500 or 7% of the region), the county is a small part of it. Martin County has the highest owner-occupied housing in the region with 78%. Vacancies are present on the coast, according to the seasonal fluctuation of population. The citrus industry employs many international migrants (Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council 1987: 5, 6, 18).

Norms and regulations, although useful in many ways, also are rigid and do not always fit the specific needs of Indiantown. In the case of housing, there are federal funds that can be used to benefit the migrants. But on the other hand, there is a double standard in applying rigid restrictions to the building of new units of housing, while

none of them are being enforced in the infamous conditions in the Blue, Yellow and White Camps, that are the obligatory first place of arrival for many of the immigrants.

### Booker Park

Booker Park is a special place. Of the four master's theses done by students from the University of Florida on Indiantown, all have at least one section on Booker Park. Maybe the interest is because of the multi-ethnicity and colorfulness of the place. Maybe it is because it has continued to be a very deprived area in a place only 24 miles away from the "Treasure Coast," one of the richest and most luxurious places in the United States. Maybe it is because in many ways it represents the history of the blacks, or "Negroes" as they were called up through the fifties in the South. Or maybe it is because, as one of the researchers says, "The history of Booker Park is a history of people and work" (Flocks 1988: 27).

Booker Park is a different town, also unincorporated like Indiantown. But for many, including the immigrants, the two towns are one place, not only because these people shift from one place to another, living first in Blue Camp and then in Indiantown, but also because Booker Park has been the place where workers stay who work for crew leaders or entrepreneurs of Indiantown. The businesses and official agency offices are also in Indiantown.

Probably the first people to come to the Booker Park area were railroad workers and farm workers, when the place was surrounded by fields of maiden cane, a wild sugar cane, and swamps (Flocks 1988: 27). As noted in the introduction and Chapter Three of this dissertation, Zora Neale and her family came in the mid-forties, along with four others from Okeechobee.

Blacks came not only from other places in Florida but also from the North, in a counter-wave of the migration of blacks to the Northeast in the twenties and thirties. Bessie's family (see Chapter Three) arrived in 1956 to work in the fields.

Then the Latin immigrants came. First, legal Puerto Ricans came to work in competition with blacks, and then Mexicans wetbacks came in the fifties and sixties, also to work in the fields but mainly to work in the citrus industry that was hiring most of the work force of Booker Park (Flocks 1988: 29). In the late seventies the first Haitians come to work in the citrus groves, and then at the beginning of the eighties the Mayan Kanjobales came to work in the vegetable fields, escaping from genocide in Guatemala.

The housing conditions of Booker Park, especially of Blue Camp, already have been described in the first section of this dissertation. While Indiantown is the business and office center, in Booker Park it is possible to find the colorful and variegated life of the Caribbean and Latin

America--people playing games in the streets or open houses, figurines of animals and religious figures displayed on small trailers, many informal activities of vendors in the streets. Indiantown was a white town and Booker Park was a black town that both became multi-ethnic.

### Housing and Neighborhoods

In 1993, data from a sample in Indiantown and West Palm Beach illustrate that the immigrants were living in the types of dwellings, shown in Table 3<sup>1</sup>.

Table 3. Type of Dwelling, 1993

<u>Type of Dwelling</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
House	22	73
Apartment	6	20
Trailer	1	3
Dormitory (campament)	1	3
<hr/>		
Total	30	100

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<sup>1</sup> The tables of this chapter, otherwise indicated, were made from field research conducted in several periods. The first was done in 1988 when I was co-researcher of the project Immigration, Ethnicity and Work in Indiantown, Florida with Dr. Allan Burns and Jerónimo Camposeco for the Labor Department of the United States, Bureau of International Labor Affairs. The second was done between December 1988 and April 1989 with funds provided by University of Florida Foundation, through Dr. Paul Doughty. And the third one was done in 1993, for the project Immigrant Adjustment and Interethnic Relations in South Florida, with the support of National Science Foundation, for Drs. Allan Burns and David Griffith. In the three cases, samples were selected for interviews, and ethnological methodology were applied.

In regard to the housing conditions, Table 4 shows how they were in 1993. Four out of five units were in substandard or dilapidated condition.

This information agrees with what Rocha (1989: 35) found in Booker Park, as displayed in Table 5.

A list of the neighborhoods where the immigrants were living in 1988-1989 is displayed in Table 6.

Table 4. Dwelling Condition, 1993

<u>Dwelling Condition</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
2	5	17
3	18	60
4	7	23
<hr/>		
Total	30	100
1 = good      5 = dilapidated		

Table 5. Housing Conditions, Booker Park, 1989

<u>Housing Conditions</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Good	48
Fair (deteriorating)	37
Poor (dilapidated-not habitable)	15
<hr/>	
Total	100

Source: State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, March 1989

Table 6. Neighborhoods Where Immigrants Were Living in 1988-1989

<u>Name</u>	<u>All Workers</u>		<u>Agricultural Workers</u>	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Blue Camp	21	40	44	70
White Camp	13	25	2	3
Yellow Camp	4	8	9	15
Goat Camp	-	-	1	2
Booker Park	6	11	-	-
Indian Mound	-	-	1	2
Big Mound Park	3	6	5	8
Trailers	1	2	-	-
Adams	1	2	-	-
Oak Apartments	2	4	-	-
Other	1	2	-	-
Total	52	100	62	100

At that time in 1989, the majority (58%) of immigrants were living in the camps, while almost all (90%) of the agricultural workers were living there. The data are in concordance with what other researchers have found (Miralles 1986: 25). However, a sizeable minority, 4 out of 10, were living in other neighborhoods. Mayans were spread all over the town, not confined to a small zone as were other ethnic groups, as a way of escape from Blue Camp and Booker Park.

Complementary data from the 1988 and 1989 surveys indicate that in 40% of the houses in Indiantown, more than one family were living, and the average number of persons by household was 10. The average number of persons per family was 6.4. Thus, in each house were living one family and 3.4 single men or up to 10 single men.

By 1993, the overcrowding of the housing facilities had increased. As the flow of immigrants increased, there were more single men in the households. There were almost no nuclear families living alone in one house. But it is important to notice that although the idea of one family in one house may be part of the white American mentality, it is not that of the Mayans, who many times live with other relatives in the same house, but in more open spaces. The types of domestic units are shown in Table 7.

One of the modalities of Mayans living in Indiantown and West Palm Beach is a household composed on only single men. This is very common in Blue and White Camps but it is also possible to see single men in other neighborhoods. In 1989 there was a Jacalteco house, with men only from Jacaltenango in Guatemala, in Big Mound Park. Eventually, they went to other towns or moved out of the house, and the Jacalteco House disappeared.

### Going to Work

Most of the workers do not work in Indiantown. The kind of work the immigrants do is not available in town. The preferred places for work are Boynton Beach and Jupiter. The places where the immigrants go to work are displayed in Table 8.

Thus, most of the workers went to work to Palm Beach county. This is because it is difficult to move to another



place, and the golf clubs and condominiums where they do the landscaping or the factories where they pack poultry are not in Martin County. See Table 9 for the counties where the immigrants were working.

From the data of the census of 1990 and the 1989 interviews, the average time for immigrants to travel from their houses to the place of work is one hour and eight minutes, and the average time it takes to start working after leaving house is one hour and fourteen minutes.

Table 7. Types of Domestic Unit, 1993

<u>Type of Domestic Unit</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Roommates (single men)	16	53
Nuclear + country men	8	27
Extended family	2	7
Singles (relatives)	2	7
Nuclear family	1	3
Single parent + child.	1	3
Total	30	100

Table 8. Places of Work, 1989

<u>Place</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Boynton Beach	25	41
Jupiter	17	27
Boca Raton	5	8
Stuart	5	8
Delray Beach	5	8
West Palm Beach	1	2
Hobsawh	1	2
Fort Myers	1	2
Geybel	1	2
Total	61	100

Table 9. Counties Where Immigrants Work, 1989

<u>Name</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Palm Beach	50	86
Martin	7	12
Other, out of Florida	1	2
Total	58	100

### Housing and Daily Life

Daily life in Indiantown presented through the eyes of the anthropologist. One day, in 1993, accompanied my Mayans friend Mario to find out about a place Mario wanted to rent to start a restaurant.

From the field diary. "April 22, Th. Another day in Indiantown. The most interesting thing that occurred is at the end of the day when I went to greet my friend Mario. He asked me to go with him to ask for a place where he can

install some business. What he had in mind is a Guatemalan restaurant.

The guy, a white with a heavy southern accent, said that the place, located in the main street of town, costs \$135,000 to buy and \$1,000 a month to rent. He also has a building in front of the kids' school and a house 10 miles north of town. He is selling everything. He added that now that he is divorced, he needs to fix his economic situation.

The man advised us that perhaps to run a restaurant will cost too much in terms of furniture and setting things for the health department and that perhaps the best thing to do is to start with a fast food and take out place in terms of Guatemalan food: tamales, special tortillas, and so on.

He asked \$100,000 for the house, but added that he will take \$75,000 cash.

Although it makes me leave town late, like at 7:30, I felt good, because Mario asked my opinion, like a friend. I told him that the idea of the restaurant is good--actually, I had that idea in 1988 when I came first to Indiantown--but that the guy is right. Mario added that it is a little out of season because people are leaving town to go north, but that he should take the place before some other person takes it. He is a little doubtful, wondering if the bank will loan the money for the house he is thinking of buying and for the business. Mario added an argument that perhaps yes because he has his account in a small--more

human--bank like Indiantown bank, than a big one like Burnett."

#### Daily Life in West Palm Beach

While living with a group of Mayans, Guatemalans, and a few Mexicans, in a hotel on Broadway Avenue, in West Palm Beach, I interviewed immigrants while working for Corn Maya and Maya Quetzal.

In some cases one interview led to another, but the reaction against being interviewed formally among the Guatemalan and Mayan immigrants made selecting a sample and carrying out the interviews very difficult. There was little enthusiasm about being interviewed. This is partly because of the reticence of indigenous Mayan people to be interviewed, as has been described in many studies in Mexico and Guatemala. It is also due to the fact that so much research, media interviewing, and general focus of attention has been put on Indiantown and the people there that they are simply tired of being asked so many personal questions. Finally, interviewing was difficult because many of the respondents live in a state of fear of deportation. There is a noticeable difference between Indiantown and West Palm Beach. It was harder to do interviews in West Palm Beach. It could be because of the net of relationships the interviewer had developed in past stances there, but also West Palm Beach is a more difficult place to do research,

specifically on Broadway Avenue, an area that seems to be an inner-city, dangerous neighborhood.

After some months of my living on Broadway Avenue, the assaults to Mayans have increased. Several of them have been robbed, and in January 1994 one of them was killed. The organizations collected money to send the body back to Guatemala and are involved in meetings with black leaders of the area to ease the tensions and prevent more incidents. What follows is a vignette of Mayans daily life in West Pam Beach. At the time of my stay in Broadway Avenue there were six guys living in Apartment 8. Abraham, José, Germán and Ramón slept in two beds, two in each one. Guillermo has his own field cot and Pepe who slept on the living room's coach. At nights when the other guys were drinking and screaming he went to bed at 3 or 4 A.M. Living conditions in general in Broadway Avenue and Lake Worth, were about the same like in Booker Park and the camps in Indiantown.

From the field diary 1993: Saturday in number eight apartment.

"In the morning the oldest (Abraham and Pepe) were sleeping until late. None has to go to the job for extra hours.

I went with Pepe to buy a lottery ticket, like six blocks up north, on this avenue. There is really a feeling that the blacks around you are watching you. Perhaps this is because of the stereotypes of inner cities these days,

and the things one hears from Guatemalans of people being robbed at the laundry, but the fear is real for me.

I went to the laundry. It is very small. Only three small washing machines and the same number of drying machines. I wondered how people can do with so few possibilities. There is another laundry next to the store where I went with Pepe to buy the lottery ticket, but there is the story of the guy who was robbed in that laundry. I was watching TV at Apartment 8 while doing laundry. I was a little late and the machine had already stopped when I arrived there, and there was a Guatemalan woman that had already put my clothes off the machine. She became very concerned when she realized the clothes were mine, but finally my words that the matter was irrelevant seemed to calm her. At the end I asked her a few things about the number of women and the kind of work they do here. She said they are a few, and that some work in the fields, but not in construction or landscaping or housing repair, and some in informal activities, like making meals and traditional dishes like *tamales* (see glossary) and selling them door to door. Sunday afternoon a girl came and tried to sell some *tamales*, but the boys didn't buy.

In the afternoon, José went to work at a restaurant; that's extra income. He is working in construction but a Chinese guy came to the street and asked if somebody wanted to go and work at his restaurant. José said yes and worked

for seven and one-half hours. It is only \$5 per hour, but it can improve.

In the afternoon Guillermo and German went to play soccer, and then Ramón went too. At the beginning German hesitated about going, and said that he better not, but finally decided to go.

Earlier Abraham went with Guillermo to the flea market. Abraham was happy because he bought three belts, *cinchos*, for one buck.

We were with Pepe watching TV when appeared what seemed to be a Mexican guy, the dialogue about the death of Roberto Chaves (I guess is really Cesar Chavés), trade unions was quiet interesting. He said that in California people were receiving more fair treatment because they were organized and have somebody to speak for them. And that in Florida there were several places were they can be reached. Pepe doesn't seemed to have the slightest interest in what the Mexican was saying. I tried to ask questions, but the conversation died.

At night, they came to my apartment and I showed them how my portable computer, lap-top, works, although in reality none of them have interest in it.

Finally, all of them were very sleepy watching TV and I was alone, and decided to go to my home.

Sunday in number eight apartment. With Abraham and Pepe we decided to have a complete program for the day.

First, we went to the flea market. There we bought several things. Abraham got a special comb for his haircut. Pepe bought a pair of pants for \$1.50 and some very good shoes for \$20. But I was the champion, I bought three pairs of pants for \$4.50 (they fit me well), a small pan for cooking for \$4, a dish holder for \$4, a colander for \$1.50. I guess I have been influenced more by the shopping addiction than my friends.

After that we went to the church and attended the mass. Before I went to the cashier and got some money. The mass was offered by a priest who seemed to be Haitian, he speaks good Spanish but with a heavy accent. He was angry because the church was semi-empty. He used the easy way, that we teachers use too, to blame people who were there for the other people who were not. Anyway, there were too few Guatemalans at the church. I realized why Abraham tried to be at this church. It was because his boss attended this mass. He was thinking of going to work at the restaurant where José went yesterday. He talked with the boss and he said he will give Abraham the opportunity to work extra Saturdays. Abraham said it was great so he hasn't had a problem working in two jobs. Yes, said the boss--a Mexican--you will do it well a couple of weeks, but then you will be too tired. So, Abraham was able to make me go to this church instead of the Saturday, and making his boss giving



him extra work, instead of having two jobs, perhaps very tiresome for him, at 47.

Then we went to Publix. Every one of us takes a cart and shop for what each one desire. Guatemalans here don't buy together. Usually each one has his stock, and prepare it for him/herself.

When we came out, Abraham proposed to go to K-Mart. I guess he likes to go and watch things, because he buys few things. The relationship between Abraham and Pepe is one of friendship but also of competition. Abraham expresses that Pepe is not as well paid as he is, and in many situations expresses that he is not able of make up his mind.

At the flea market we met with Gérman and Guillermo. But they didn't stay long. José went to the restaurant again. At 10 p.m. he hadn't returned yet."

#### Education: The Way to Integration or Improvement?

Education is an aspect where many of the generational changes of migrants can be seen. Some of the Mayan children are skipping the Spanish step, going directly from Maya to English. The impact of the war experiences in the further psychological development of Mayan children have already been studied by Boothby (1986), and other educative aspects among Haitians by Dorman (1985). Also, immigrants that applied for the Ninety Days Program of the 1986 IRCA Law (see Chapter Two) are required to take an English test,

and special education is required in that area. But the needs of the immigrants and their characteristics are also imposing many changes and transformations in the local education resource use and procedures.

### Possibilities and Legal Status

There are educational resources available for all age groups, in schools with federal and state funds, or with the support of religious groups. Nevertheless, there are factors that inhibit their possible use. Age is one of them. The older immigrants who are thinking of returning to Guatemala or Mexico have no interest in attending school or learning English.

As said above, according to the IRCA 1986 law, those who have temporary resident visas have to pass a simple test of English and basic knowledge of United States history in order to obtain a permanent resident visa. This Mayan and Mexican's subgroup has the intention to obtain the necessary understanding. However, this remains more of an intention than a reality due to many difficulties they face. In the first place, they are very tired after a workday of 10 or more hours, and one or more trip hours. Another difficulty is the mobility of agricultural workers, going north for the work season, which implies little progress and difference in the educational techniques they receive. Mayans migrants' literacy rate in Spanish is approximately 60%, and their

average schooling is four years of elementary school. This relatively low level of formal education is much lower in English. Only 15% of interviewed immigrants are literate in this language. This figure includes some Chicanos and Mayan leaders who have attended school in the United States.

### Formal Education

Aguirre found that the average years of education for agricultural immigrants for 1989 was sixth grade (U.S. Department of Labor 1991: 33). In comparison, for Mayans the average years of education was fourth grade for 1988 and slightly lower for the 1989 sample.

Table 10. Years of Elementary School, Immigrants and Spouses 1988, Immigrants 1989

<u>Years of school</u>	<u>1988</u>				<u>1989</u>	
	<u>Immigrants</u>		<u>Spouses</u>		<u>Immigrants</u>	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
0	29	32	26	46	6	8
1	4	4	2	4	2	3
2	5	6	3	5	9	12
3	8	9	8	14	16	22
4	7	8	-	-	7	10
5	8	9	4	7	6	8
6	29	32	14	24	27	37
Total	90	100	57	100	73	100

My 1989 sample was stratified with emphasis on the immigrants who were working in farms and citrus industries. Thus, the level of education of agricultural workers was

still lower. At that time, most of the people were still coming from the state of Huehuetenango, and almost all of them were Mayans. The fact is that Mayans coming to Indiantown in the eighties had two fewer years of education than that of other agricultural workers coming to the United States. Indeed, it was a handicap, but as Pamela said, they have another kind, Mayan traditional education, that also taught them the strategies to overcome the disadvantage.

In accordance with what was said above, the level of attendance of high school is relatively low. Only 1 out of 5 Mayans has attended at least one year of high school in 1988 and only 1 out of 10 for the 1989 sample. The spouses of the immigrants had very similar but lower levels of formal education, with the mean for elementary school attendance 2.6 years, and 0.5 for high school. More detailed data are presented in Table 11.

College education was almost nonexistent for the immigrants in 1988 and 1989. Only two Mayans, both current leaders of the community in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, have gone through the university. Another leader has had technical training for three years. For the college education of the spouses, it was zero, but two of them attended one year of a technical education program.

### Next Generations

Because of their own motives or their parents' decisions, the adolescents and young people who arrive with their families and could take advantage of free education often times prefer to work. This is understandable since an agricultural worker can earn up to \$900 per month during season. A family with a mother, father, and two working children with luck can get a "small fortune" out of a work season, if one compares the wages here with the ones in Mexico or Guatemala. Other youngsters, still a minority, choose to study, and their parents support them.

Nonetheless, the formal education of the children of the immigrants has increased dramatically, and not only in comparison of the children with the parents; it increases as we move from the first to the third child, as shown in Tables 12 and 13.

In conclusion, the most conspicuous change is with the children 12 years old or less. All attend school and learn English and even Spanish very quickly. They are bilingual and some even trilingual. It is a common to see them acting as interpreters for their parents, as in the case of women do not speak English or Spanish. It is without doubt that in a few more years this differentiation will have wide and profound effects on the relationship between age groups and in the overall acculturative process.

As mentioned before, there are educational resources, but there is no uniformity in their orientation. In official institutes for children, teachers of Caribbean and Latin background should have an understanding of the cultural differences and children's difficulties, especially the initial language barrier. But some staff members and directors (see Pamela's narrative in Chapter Three) have a racist and/or ethnicist position, sharing the prejudices and stereotypes of major society, about the dirtiness, laziness, low intelligence, and disorganization of Latins and Caribbeans.

Table 11. Years of High School, Immigrants and Spouses 1988, Immigrants 1989

<u>Years of school</u>	<u>1988</u>		<u>1989</u>		<u>1989</u>	
	<u>Immigrants</u>		<u>Spouses</u>		<u>Immigrants</u>	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
0	71	79	52	85	72	87
1	4	4	-	-	4	5
2	4	4	3	5	3	4
3	5	6	4	7	3	4
4	1	1	-	-	-	-
5	2	2	2	3	-	-
6	3	4	-	-	-	-
Total	90	100	61	100	82	100

Table 12. Years of Elementary School, Children of Immigrants

<u>Years of school</u>	<u>1st Child</u>		<u>2nd Child</u>		<u>3rd Child</u>	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
0	7	14	3	9	1	4
1	11	22	2	6	1	4
2	4	8	3	9	5	21
3	4	8	2	6	1	4
4	2	4	4	12	4	17
5	4	8	5	17	1	4
6	19	36	13	41	11	46
Total	51	100	32	100	24	100

Table 13. Years of High School, Children of Immigrants

<u>Years of school</u>	<u>1st Child</u>		<u>2nd Child</u>		<u>3rd Child</u>	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
0	14	49	8	44	4	33
1	1	3	2	11	2	17
2	4	14	4	22	1	8
3	5	17	3	17	2	17
4	4	14	-	-	1	8
5	-	-	-	-	2	17
6	1	3	1	6	-	-
Total	39	100	18	100	12	100

CHAPTER FIVE  
MAKING IT: WORK AS  
THE MAIN ISSUE

Work

Leisure, eating, sleeping, and working are the main activities of human beings. Through work--the conscious transformation of nature--we made our journey through the hominid path. From work, human beings develop their own bodies while creating the skills necessary for industry, the arts, and religion. Thus, one is known for what one does for a living, and so it is that for most of the immigrant groups in the United States, work is also a source of identity but not always of identification. Groups that travel most of the time and perform a great variety of tasks and use many skills to survive, get out of work an identity but not an identification. They lack a place and a culture for identification.

In the case of the Maya of Indiantown and West Palm Beach, work permits both identity and identification. Their social identification is determined within their own groups in the inner city and in rural Indiantown through language and networks of kinship and friendship from the country or region of origin.



In addition to culturally declaring themselves as being Mayan, the immigrants are proud of being legitimized as workers. It is a main source of identity and belonging. Since work and cultural pride are important socioeconomic traits, we should ask if the Mayans in Indiantown and West Palm Beach are making a success of their lives in Florida. If so, they are making it through the hard work they do. For example, a small but increasing group has been able to buy houses because they have proven they can and do pay for them, that they have stable and reliable work habits, and not because there is any better understanding and agreement for living together with other ethnic groups. Whites have gone to their limits of tolerance, but Mayans continue developing their pattern of "resistance" (see Chapter Six) through work. And this the reason why the they are making it.

Mayans are proud of being hard workers, and because of this they are able to live here, send money to their families and towns in Guatemala, bring others here, and buy houses in Indiantown. It also permits them to compete successfully for jobs with whites, blacks and Mexicans. Hard work is the reason why many employers in the region prefer Mayan workers.

Mayans enhance their work opportunities through other cultural strategies as well, including diversification of employment. Almost all started as farm workers, and at the

beginning of this study, in 1988, more than half of the Mayans could be considered primarily as farm workers. In 1993, however, only around one-third of them work in agriculture, with the majority employed in a wide variety of jobs, ranging from lake conservation, golf course maintenance, construction, furniture manufacturing, banking, school teaching, and in remittance agencies for Guatemala and Central America (see Tables 15, 16).

Through such work they have spread over the area from Indiantown to Palm Beach Gardens, Lake Worth, Lantana, and other places that are now the nodes of the expanding network. But the way they have moved also tells us about differences among them, in terms of community orientation, goal preferences between good jobs or staying with friends, and many other related decisions they make.

Because Mayans are considered quiet and good workers, owners and crew leaders hold them in high esteem. They are also considered to be "safe" employees because they have no history of participation in strikes or political protests. This apparent passivity shows signs of change, beginning with the "Posadas" of 1988 as a protest against the INS policies and the labor policies they perceived as exploiting them. The strike that took place in 1993 against one of the biggest regional landscaping firms also confirms that they will stand up for their rights. The pride of being good, hard workers is not only a moral and ethical value of a

decent people; behind that value there is a strategy, a collective planning.

The social reproduction of the workers is paid by themselves. Working an average of nearly eight months yearly, they have to save money for the time they are not working. In doing so, they are subsidizing the state and the business enterprises because they are "semi-legal." They are legal enough to work but not legal enough to receive all the social and economic fringe benefits.

#### A Day of Work

While doing his work one hot day in June 1993, Leonidas Céspedes remembered the first day he went to work for the company he is now so proud to work in. A friend had helped him, believed in him, and actually recruited him. In Guatemala he had been a shoemaker who did not have to work under the sun as a laborer, but now his thoughts were with his family and the goal of buying a house for them in his town.

"his day he was cutting the grass, and at 11 a.m. he took a break, resting for 10 minutes while eating an apple. He likes that, and he drinks some water, better than drinking sodas. Let us listen closely to his tale.

"What I did today you will not believe. I work in a golf condominium. It includes the golf course, the other sports fields, the houses, and the environment.

We do not take care of the golf course. We do the landscaping. In our group we are 5. In the other group they are 15, 20 in total. We work with a "36 machine" to cut the grass and with two "edgers" to cut the borders, and with a "54 machine" to cut the grass.

But it is not the same in all companies. We also *trimiamos*, trim the plants and trees. We clean the garbage. We do everything. In other companies, different groups perform different tasks. That is why we get tired.

We cover three places. One place with 40 houses, inside the golf condominium. They have a gate with a guard. The people living there have the right to use the golf course, the tennis courts, the pools, and everything. In the care of the golf course there are 20 to 25 people working there. Half of them are Americans, also a few blacks, and the rest are Guatemalans.

We do the same labor all year round. Mondays we do not cut the grass. All Monday we trim, cut the plants and trees. Tuesday we cut the grass. We start at 7 a.m., checking and cleaning the machines up 7:30. Then we start cutting the grass until 10 a.m. And then until noon we have to gather the grass and clean the place very well with small carts and a truck. We have to use special machines to cut the grass because the

soil is irregular. Those machines are the 36. They are difficult to control. In the afternoon we trim and clean globiar the place. Again, Thursdays we do not cut the grass.

The work is tiring, but it has advantages. In one of these big companies, one has insurance. For example, I have an insurance for \$25,000 in case something happens to me. In *la labor* (see glossary), one do not have any insurance. I like this job. I know it is hard work, especially now with the heat. If one does not take water, one gets dehydrated. But as far as you like the job . . . and anyway I have come here . . . to work. And thanks to God, I have a job.

In my team, as I said, we are four from Guatemala, one from Trinidad and one white American. That *bolillo* (see glossary) is the only American that I have seeing working like us. Because I know and I have seen that Americans really do not work, but this guy does even though he is not young. The boss is very pleased with him.

We have three places to cover. But we do not get mixed with the other guys of the landscape team or the golf course. I believe the work in the golf course is slower, and softer.

Before, in the place I was working before here, one American gave me the opportunity to use a trim

machine. And I did it--with fear, but I did it. Then, when I was looking for a job, a friend asked me if I was able to trim. I said yes, and he also asked me if I can use a 36 machine to cut the grass. I said no, I do not even know them. He said it was an opportunity to work in their company. He trusted me. He said, I know you are able to do that. I have faith in you. And you know what, he added, you do not know the machine, and I am going to show you a picture of it. He had a picture of him with the machine in his house. He explained to me how the machine was and how to use it. Even though we have known each other for only two weeks. That is why I say this is beautiful. How can trust and a good relationship became a reality between us. I trust God. He taught me how to use it with the picture. It was a Friday. Then the Monday, I went. He gave me a ride with the guy that give one to him. Then we went with the boss. He presented me, because he speaks English. He said that I was the new guy who was going to start working there. The boss asked if I had experience. And my friend had to lie; he said yes, he (me) has a little experience. He was helping me.

Then we started to work, and the machine is very sensitive, if you push the machine just a little bit, it turns to the side a lot. The boss was watching me. My friend said do not get nervous, you are going to

make it. But the machine was too much for me and it pulls me to the side. The boss was watching me, and he said do not get nervous, look I am going to show you. He took the machine and showed me how to use it. I told myself that I had to do it, because on that depends to get the job. See these scars I have here. When I finished cutting the grass, in between my fingers I was bleeding. I did not tell anybody. I cured myself at night because I had to work the other day. Now, with the experience I have, I am able to guide the machine with one hand. But I had the scars from that day. The same happened to the guy who came to work next. I realized what he was going through. When he finished the work he also was bleeding in his hands. Nobody noticed, but I did.

Americans do not stay long in this job. In the year and three months I now have been working there, in the other group several Americans have come and gone. Even that group does not work as hard as we do. My other team workers, one right now has fled to Guatemala; he completed two years in the job. Another guy has completed one year. Another one, the youngest, he has completed three years. He is the oldest in the job, and he speaks English. He is very humble, but he speaks beautiful English. The boss trusts him, and gives him all the instructions in English.

I have not have experience of working with Mexicans. Some, when I was working in the labor center. There I got my tickets. It means that when you are working in the labor center (see Figure 5-3), you have to go there each day and they send you to a different place each day, but if the boss or crew leader is happy with you, you get a ticket and the next day or days you do not have to go to the labor center, you go directly to the job. So, I started having a ticket sure for three days a week, Monday to Wednesday, but the American, the boss, said he was not able to hire me in the job for good because it was only three days a week. In some golf courses they get the people from the labor center, and if you behave really good and do good job, then they give you a ticket for a whole week. Without ticket you have to go to a different place each day and do whatever they want you to do, even if you do not like it.

I do not want to criticize anybody, but Americans say that they do not like Mexicans to work for them because they work slowly. Besides, they are not as humble as we are. With Haitians I worked in *la labor*, but never we mixed with each other. There were like 20 Haitians working in that company. But, vegetable crops were made by *tablones* (see glossary); each tablón has ten furrows. Two persons start making each furrow



until they complete a tablón. So, they work their tablones and we ours. But those people work hard too.

The work I am doing now has nothing to do with what I did in Guatemala. Here you have to do whatever is needed. I was a shoemaker. I never grabbed a tool there to work in the land. I am from Totonicapán, and being a shoemaker is a family tradition. But now, after all I have endured here, I have something to tell to my family. And it is beautiful. Somebody told me that I should write a book about my experiences, someday. For me, it was hard, because I was not accustomed to working under the sun. I had never worked in the fields. Most of the people who come from the San Miguel and Huehuetenango area, they are accustomed to working in their *milpas* or going to the coast to work picking cotton, coffee. But I admired their women, they work harder than men.

For me the hardest part was to get accustomed to the physical work. In Totonicapán I worked under a roof. I did not care if it was raining, if it was cold or hot, or whatever. For me it was enough if there was energy to work. I had my table and my tools, and that was it. But when I came here, it was quite different. But people told me how it was here. There are people who tell lies about how it is here, but fortunately

people told me that the hard part for me was going to be that I was not accustomed to physical work.

So, I came here, two years and three months ago, and my first job was in *la labor*. It was only for a month. Not because I did not want to work more, but because it was the end of the season. It was like this month [June] of the year. I was picking chilies. We pulled the plastics that are the base for the *tablones*, and it is the end of the job until the next year. I was working with Bacho, a Chicano.

Then I started to work with the labor office in Jupiter (see Figure 5-3) where I did different things. Many people say *la labor* and landscaping are almost comparable in terms of being hard. The problem for me in *la labor* was that in Guatemala I had been sick in my kidneys. It was really hard, but I did it.

I do not know why I have stayed here in Indiantown instead of going to other places, like West Palm Beach, that are closer to the work places. Maybe because this was the first place I arrived. When I came, I did not know anybody. But I knew there were many people from Totonicapan. I came from Guatemala with four other people from Totonicapan, but they had problems and they had to go back there. So, I arrived here with other people from the state of Totonicapan, but from another town--its name is San Francisco El Alto. I did not

know them. The first night, and for the next two weeks, I slept in a van. There were people from Totonicapan, but I did not know them. All of the people I came with went with relatives or friends. I ended up alone. The guy who brought us here gave me courage and said I could stay in his van. I ate once daily. I did not have a job, no papers, I did not know anybody. It was hard. The guy gave me food and let me use his room to take a shower.

Then I recognized a guy who had been with me in elementary school in Totonicapan. We talked and recognized each other. He asked me if I had a job. He talked with his boss and gave me the opportunity of going to work in *la labor*. After the van, I started to live with people from San Francisco El Alto in a small house. I was there for four months. Then, I moved to where I live now, in these trailers. The family I am living with now with are from San Miguel. We are seven. The guy with his wife and three children, another guy, who is the same one we went to the school together, and myself. It is not a comfortable place, but I feel peaceful and happy there. I have the key and can come and go at the hour I wish. The kids are kids, and sometimes they bother me, but you have to understand kids. Maybe what I like in my house is the freedom I have.

I am not thinking of buying a house now, because the people who have done that, it is because they have their families here already. I have my family in Guatemala, and my goal is to buy a house for them there. This is my goal. That is the reason I am working so hard here. And I think most of the people here are doing the same, thinking of going there. If I am not able to get all the money I need, maybe I will go there to visit my family, and then I will come back here to finish getting the money for the house, one year more or two. Then, I do not know what I will do.

Anyway, the effort has been worthwhile. Since the moment one left our country only God knows where one is going to arrive. I trust and thank God. One of my sons, who is 16 now, is thinking of coming. But I said that it is better that he finishes his study first. Because, otherwise, it will be worthless what I have done until now. He likes math and computers and I think he needs to learn that and improve his possibilities."

A detailed and thoughtful description of a typical day for two Mayan women was done by Maria Rocha (1991: 42-50), where it is possible to see how they combine the activities for taking care of their families with other chores to provide income for the family through the informal sector.



FIGURE 5-1  
MAYANS AT WORK IN VEGETABLE FIELDS



FIGURE 5-2  
FARM WORK MACHINERY



FIGURE 5-3  
THE LABOR CENTER OFFICE



FIGURE 5-4  
INFORMAL SECTOR INITIATIVES: MAKING TRADITIONAL MAYAN BREAD  
IN THE KITCHEN FOR SALE



FIGURE 5-5  
FORMAL SECTOR ECONOMY: THE SEWING COOPERATIVE

### Immigrants as Farm Workers

Mayans are not farm workers. While living in Guatemala they were not farm workers. They had a milpa, a piece of land in the village. They worked in agriculture while doing other things. In the United States they became agricultural workers but they had Indiantown as the town (see Maria Alonso's recount in Chapter Three) of reference. They were not uprooted as farm workers. They are not enmeshed in the whirlpool of farm work because they have their culture backup. They are not immersed in the kind of behavior Oscar Lewis called the "culture of poverty."

### Working in the Homeland

In their town of origin, most Mayans were farmers and agricultural workers. In fact, in 1988 82% of them said that basic agriculture was the main economic activity of the village or the town where they lived. Very often, subsistence agriculture was complemented by working in commercial agriculture, artisan work, commerce, mining, raising cattle, working in tourism or in infirmity, and even working in factories, as it can be seen in Table 14<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The tables and other data of this chapter, otherwise indicated, were made from research conducted by Julián Arturo in several periods. The first was done in 1988 as co-researcher of the project Immigration, Ethnicity and Work in Indiantown, Florida with Dr. Allan Burns and Jerónimo Camposeco for the Labor Department of the



Table 14 Economic Activities in Homeland (Guatemala)

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Basic agriculture	47	63
Commercial agriculture	7	9
Agric. + artisan	7	9
Sugar cane field	5	6
Agric. + commerce	3	4
Agric. + factory + livestock	3	4
Agric. + factory	2	2
Agric. + com.+ art	1	1
Miner	1	1
Factory	1	1
Total	77	100

In fact, 40% of the towns were indicated as diversified, having three or more activities.

The parents of the immigrants were or are dedicated to agriculture too, but they also perform diverse complementary activities. It is part of the culture of the highlands of Guatemala and of the Mayan tradition for many centuries.

The fathers of the immigrants perform agricultural basic activities in 68% of the cases, but they also engage in a complex net of activities that include artisan work, working by wage in the coast, chauffeur, small commerce,

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United States, Bureau of International Labor Affairs. The second was done between December 1988 and April 1989 with funds provided by University of Florida Foundation, through Dr. Paul Doughty. And the third was done in 1993, for the project Immigrant Adjustment and Interethnic Relations in South Florida, with the support of National Science Foundation, for Drs. Allan Burns and David Griffith. In the three cases, samples were selected for interviews, and ethnological methodology was applied.

barber, health promotor, cooperative worker, cowboy, mason, carpenter, and butcher.

Not surprisingly, the mothers were dedicated mainly to domestic activities in 75% of the cases. But, again, it is complemented by part-time or even full-time washing clothes by hand, artisan work, bakery, 'costurera,' domestic worker, 'tendera,' 'alfarera.'

The story of Ignacio (Bizarro Upján and Sexton 1985) in Campesino. The Diary of a Guatemalan Indian illustrates the work life of Indian peasants in the highlands of Guatemala. Ignacio combines the activities of a crew leader for the cotton and coffee seasons on the coast; at the same he farms his own *milpa* (see glossary) and has coffee and onion crops on rented land in several places in the *municipio*. He also became a baker and president of a cooperative, and an *alcalde* (see glossary) of the *Cofradía de la Virgen María* (see Appendix B), a religious brotherhood.

Thus, peasants like Ignacio often work 12 to 15 hours daily, but they also are intermittent workers because they do not have a stable job from an employer. Their *milpas* do not sustain them, and they have to go to other places and perform other activities. When peasants from villages like Ignacio's go to the coast to work in the crops, they are paid by the day or week, through a crew leader which in many ways is similar to what immigrant farm workers do in the United States. The main difference, however, is that Mayans

in Guatemala have a home, a place to come back to after the seasonal work and a *milpa* to back them up for subsistence.

The mobility of Ignacio is impressive. He does not spend a week without traveling outside of the town, and also moves daily to the different fields and work sites. Ignacio's complex network of activity is a phenomenon common not only in Guatemala and Central America, but also in Latin America and the Third World generally. That strategy for survival, *el rebusque* (see glossary) as it is called in Colombia, is part of the informal economy and adaptive culture of the Third World, reflecting how the capitalist system embraces other modes of production. Many Mayan and *ladino* peasants in Guatemala acquire survival skills by being seasonal migrants to the coastal plantations, moving to Mexico, as they build a network of acquaintances with well-known crew leaders and routes.

Breaking down the kind of working activities they performed in their homeland for informants in the 1988 survey shows that the main activity they indicated is subsistence agriculture, while coffee harvesting on the coast is number two, complemented by a variety of other jobs. In all, 14 other activities were mentioned (see Table 15).

The importance of subsistence agricultural work diminished in the third activity, and increased others like coffee harvest and also cotton harvest, but, what is more

important, a variety of menial jobs of the informal sector, like shoe polishing, masonry, machine operator, daily wage worker, and selling on the street. And the same profile continues for activity four, including more formal activities like machine operator in factory or work shop, 'vigilante'.

One important factor to consider is the willingness of Mayan immigrants to take risks, their confidence in themselves to be able to adapt and live in difficult conditions in transitory states. Approximately half of them had been working in Mexico, and almost all in other places of Guatemala (see Figure 1-3) before coming to Florida.

The data gathered for 1988 survey confirm the assumption that they were intermittent workers, meaning that although they work all year round, almost all of their work is seasonal in character, even at home, working in the milpa and at other complementary jobs. By recording the times they had performed each kind of work and how often, we see a very consistent pattern of going to work to the coast and returning to work in the milpa or in jobs of the informal sector. In Figure 1-3 it is possible to follow the path the immigrants traveled seasonally in Guatemala and Mexico.

For the 1989 survey, the sample was stratified to include a significative number of people who were from the same region in Guatemala, living in the Blue Camp in Indiantown and working in agriculture. A complete sequence

of the different jobs in Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States was collected in order to understand their work pathways in becoming the hard workers they are so proud to be.

Their primary activity was basic agriculture, an overwhelming 77%. A significant minority (13%), however, did not perform agricultural work at all, mainly because many of them had been students and/or white collar workers and were coming for political reasons. Also significant is the diversity of activities--that at least half of them had engaged in other than agricultural activities in their villages.

Following the sequence for the workers who had more than one activity, the main work was harvesting coffee, with almost half of them working in coffee on the Pacific coast. After that came work in picking fruit and cotton, and this further diversifies to daily wage worker, sugar cane cutter, forest cooperative worker, cattle worker--in total, 22 different activities. A picture of this diversity is shown in Table 15.

Table 15. Agriculture Jobs of Immigrants in Guatemala and Mexico

<u>Jobs</u>	<u>First Activity</u>		<u>Second Activity</u>	
	Freq	Perc	Freq	Perc
Basic agriculture	63	78	-	-
Coffee harvest (coast)	3	4	20	24
Cotton harvest (coast)	2	2	7	8
Garlic harvest	-	-	1	1
Beans harvest	-	-	2	2
Wheat harvest	1	1	2	2
Corn harvest	1	1	2	2
Fruit harvest (coast)	-	-	7	9
Sugar cane cutter	1	1	1	1
Day laborer	-	-	2	2
Cow boy	-	-	1	1
Forest preserver coop.	-	-	2	2
Fruit harvest (mountain)	-	-	1	1
Non agricultural worker	11	13	32	45
Total	82	100	80	100

In order to have a complete set of their activities, I also asked them for their nonagricultural jobs. For the first activity, businessman was the highest frequency (19%) and then tailor (14%). Carpenter, mason, and cobbler were the other main ones. For the women, domestic worker was almost the only one. Then for the second, third, and fourth activities, the same ones mentioned for the first remain as important, but a variety of new ones appear: practical infirmary, pharmacist, artisan, car washer, weaver, road construction worker, butcher, alphabetizer, musician, petty store owner, cooperative worker, chauffeur, mechanic,

community development worker, social worker, and hotel clerk.

In order to have an accurate picture of the variety of activities they performed, a list of them is in Table 16.

Table 16. Nonagricultural Activities of Immigrants In Guatemala and Mexico

<u>Job</u>	<u>1st</u>		<u>2nd</u>	
	Freq	Perc	Freq	Perc
Artisan	1	1	-	-
Merchant	11	14	4	5
Weaver	4	5	3	4
Practical nurse	2	2	2	2
Tailor	8	10	5	6
Carpenter	5	6	3	4
Maid	7	9	-	-
Shoemaker	3	4	-	-
Car washer	1	1	-	-
Mason or bricklayer	5	6	2	2
Teacher	-	-	1	1
Road worker	1	1	-	-
Musician	2	2	-	-
Small store owner	1	1	1	1
Cooperative worker	1	1	1	1
Household worker	2	2	-	-
Butcher	2	2	-	-
Car or truck driver	-	-	1	1
Social worker	-	-	1	1
Hotel clerk	1	1	-	-
Only agricultural worker	25	32	58	72
Total	82	100	82	100

As it was said before, workers traveled to other places in Guatemala and to Mexico as part of their way of coping with their needs, as a strategy for life. Most of them, 70%, did some kind of work besides agriculture, and almost one-third (29%) did more than one.

### Farm Work in the United States

In order to see and understand Guatemalan migrant behavior more clearly, at this point, a concise review of the general context of the agricultural work in the United States is helpful. Only 3% of the population of the United States, or seven and one-half million people in 1993, work in agriculture. Unfortunately for them, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 does not apply to agriculture, and so there is no minimum wage in agriculture. In particular, the laws in Florida are thought by the workers to be very easy for farm owners with respect to worker conditions (Peter Upton, interview 1993). In general, worker protests have been futile in Florida, as history shows. Thus, in 1944, blacks struck for higher wages and, in response, thousands of poor whites from the North were sent to Florida and Jamaicans were contracted to work in the Everglades region, beginning a longstanding pattern of labor contracting.

Palm Beach County is one of the three counties that contain the largest farms in Florida, the other two being Dade and Seminole Counties. In Florida, citrus and vegetables are the most valuable crops, followed at a distance by sugar cane and nursery plants (Fernald 1981: 164-170). The bottom line here, as in any other industry, is profit.



Despite studies and recommendations to improve the very poor work, housing, and life conditions of farm workers in Florida, their standards of living have remained unchanged since 1947. The main issues in these respects have been 1) to increase the responsibilities for local communities and employers; 2) to create legislation to regulate child labor and require school attendance; 3) to extend the benefits of state workmen's compensation to cover migrant workers; 4) to increase transportation safeguards for migrant workers; 5) to establish federal grants-in-aid for farm workers to assist states and communities; 6) to prohibit contracted foreign workers until local labor sources are exhausted; and 7) to guarantee a minimum wage for farm workers. According to Mohl (1981: 15), these recommendations have been ignored and opposed by agribusiness, the legislature, and government officials.

In the movie Poverty in the Valley of Plenty, which premiered in 1948, it was said that "These workers, toiling in a great industry, are deprived of the rights and opportunities which are granted to all other industrial workers. . . . This cold water shower . . . is used by 25 or 30 families. To wash their clothes, women have to heat water over an open fire. . . . There is no law requiring a farm corporation to carry compensation insurance for their employees" (Mohl 1981: 16). Housing conditions are the same as described for Blue Camp, 1993, in Chapter Four. It seems

that time has been suspended in these places. And the narrator of the movie continues, "Beneath this divine canopy of cleanliness and purity . . . nine or ten people live in a one-room shack. . . . Tools and equipment would be housed in a nice, clean, waterproof shed" (Mohl 1981: 16). Again, the same situation pertains to the shacks in Booker Park and the apartments on Broadway Avenue in West Palm Beach in 1993 (see Figures 4-1, 4-2, 4-3).

From 1970 to 1980, 230,000 migrant laborers traveled all around the country following the crops, 80,000 of them in the Atlantic Coast Migrant Stream. According to Mohl (1981), 50% of them were blacks. Today, this is the same basic path that Mayans follow, although many Mayans also go to other places (see Figure 1-4).

In general, throughout the United States there has been a steady decline in the percentage of native-born Americans engaged in the farm labor sector. Reasons for this decrease in the numbers of American farm workers by the end of the 1980s were mechanization, changes in agricultural systems due to agribusiness research, and the increased importation of Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean workers paid at lower wages. Despite efforts by Cesar Chavez and other labor organizers, the role of unions was small and limited in regional importance.

The Harvest of Shame, first aired as a CBS television program in November 25, 1960, inspired by John Steinbeck's

novel, Grapes of Wrath, was really a re-run of the first version emitted as a film before television in 1948, and was followed in 1970 by one Harvest of Shame Update, an NBC television program that continued to show poor conditions. Data presented in the film revealed that farm workers were employed only 136 days per year (27.2 weeks, one-half year). No one with a family to support can afford to work at that rate. Nevertheless, farm laborers continue at this level today, and all such workers, including the Mayans, are thus subsidizing all agricultural business by being low-wage workers, paid for only half of a year.

The migrant farm labor season ends in November in the North, and then the workers come back to Florida: to Homestead, Belle Glade, Okeechobee, Immokalee, Pahokee, and Indiantown.

Child labor is another major feature of the farm labor picture. The film A Day Without Sunshine, 1977, made with the participation of the anthropologist Jerry Brown, showed that the large, billion-dollar corporations like Coca-Cola, and Caulklins, in Florida were the seasonal users of 5,000 youngsters less than 16 years old, who worked in their field harvests just as they do on virtually all the farms.

Finally, as Alec Wilkinson (1990) concluded from the findings of the Subcommittee on Labor Standards (part of the United States House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor) in 1983, the regime of South Florida

sugar mills is one of totalitarianism. "The blacklist, arbitrary firings, and a clear preference for foreign workers who can be summarily dismissed and sent home, never to return to the United States, for the slightest infraction or sign of organized protest over wages and working conditions" (Wilkinson 1990: 242-243).

This, then, is the work environment for Mayan farm workers, in which they struggle to survive and which they yearn to leave.

#### Current Farm Work in the United States

This part of the Farm Work section is a discussion of my data with a summary of the relevant information from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 1989, United States Department of Labor (1991), conducted by Aguirre and Associates. The survey, done in 1989 in Indiantown, took a sample of Mayans working mainly in agriculture. To ensure that data collection was sensitive to seasonal fluctuations in the agricultural work force, interviewing cycles lasting 6 to 10 weeks were conducted four times during the fiscal year: one cycle began in October of 1988, one in January of 1989, one in April of 1989, and one in July of 1989. The number of interviews conducted during a cycle was proportionate to the amount of work activity at that time of the year. My data correspond to the July cycle for the 1988

survey and to the January and April cycles for the 1989 survey.

The Seasonal Agriculture Services (SAS)<sup>2</sup> labor force is comprised mainly of young workers, men, Hispanics and immigrants, whose general characteristics are as follows:

Age. Almost two-thirds of SAS workers are under 35 years of age, with a median age of 30 years. Mexicans are the youngest SAS workers, with a median age of 28 years. The median age of non-Mexican-born Latin Americans is 32. In this regard, with a median age of 29 in 1989, the Mayans also are atypical, being younger than the other groups of workers.

Gender. Three-fourths of SAS workers are men. For the Mayans living in Indiantown, men were 72% of the 1988 sample and 28% were women.

Marital status. The majority of SAS workers are married and/or have children. More than two in five SAS workers live away from their families while performing SAS work, with men and foreign-born workers most likely to be living away from their families. In 1988 more than half of the Mayans were married. Many of the married men left their families in Guatemala, in accordance with NAWS data. But in

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. agricultural workers performing Seasonal Agricultural Services during fiscal year 1989 (October 1, 1988 - September 31, 1989). The information presented by the U.S. Department of Labor (1991) was gathered during more than 2,500 personal interviews with SAS workers in all the country.

1989 and 1993, the proportion of singles coming to Indiantown and West Palm Beach increased.

Immigrants. Almost two-thirds of SAS workers are foreign born. The majority of them have been in the United States eight years or longer. This means they now know the pathways and the people to go to find the places of work. Mayans, being of recent arrival, had been in the States for approximately five years in 1988, and even less time in 1989 and 1993.

Hispanic. Over three-fourths of SAS workers are of Latin American origin, confirming what was said before--that most food served at American tables is planted and harvested by people from Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean. Additional confirmation for this is that Spanish is the primary language for almost two out of three SAS workers. It should be understood, however, that Mayans do not consider themselves as Hispanic in origin, although the most recent wave of *ladinos* (see glossary) coming from Guatemala do.

Legality. Most SAS workers have United States work authorization, but a small minority are unauthorized. Over one-third applied for legalization through IRCA programs. Mayans in 1989 and 1993 had the legal status, shown in Table 17.

Table 17. Legal Status of Mayans 1989-1993

<u>Status</u>	1989	1993
N = 82	N = 30	
Percent	Percent	
Political asylum, pending without work permit	22	-
Political asylum, pending with work permit	61	81
Provisional resident (red card) IRCA program	13	-
Provisional resident (green card) IRCA program	4	13
Citizen	-	3
No papers	-	3
<hr/>		
Total	100	100

Also two out of three Mayans in Indiantown applied for the OP-1<sup>3</sup>, the "lottery" program in 1989. Compared with Aguirre's data, Mayans applied less to the IRCA programs, getting their work permits through asylum applications instead. Currently, more than 80% of Mayans are asylum applicants, pending response. This means they occupy a semi-legal status, a purgatory that allows them to work but not to have the same rights as residents.

Confirmation of the last statement is that one-fifth of SAS workers are recipients of needs-based social services.

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<sup>3</sup> The OP-1 Immigrant Visa Program, also known as "Under-represented Country" [Berman or Diversity] Program. See Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Food stamps are the type of assistance most often received. In the case of the Mayans, however, only one out of ten received that kind of help in 1989.

Education. Most SAS workers have low levels of education. More than one-half have completed eight or fewer years of formal education. As noted (see Chapter Four), Mayans are less formally educated than the average SAS worker. In 1988 the average number of school years was less than four and in 1989 a little over four years (see Education in Chapter Four). However, the youngest *ladino* groups coming to Indiantown and West Palm Beach have completed high school in many cases. Today the children of the Mayans also have a much higher level of formal education. The first child, with an average age of eleven years, already has almost five years of school, and a few of the children are already attending college in South Florida and North-Central Florida and even in Iowa.

Regional differences. The data of Mayans and Guatemalans in general in Indiantown who worked in agriculture in 1988 and 1989 correspond with the following statements for SAS, specifically for the Southeast region. The Northeast and the **Southeast** have the highest proportion of workers who do not have their families at the work site.

SAS jobs in fruits and nuts are most common in the Northwest, the Southwest, and the Northeast. Vegetable SAS



jobs are more predominant in the **Southeast**, Midwest, and Western Plains.

The **Southeast** and the Northeast have the highest concentrations of harvesting SAS jobs and the lowest frequency of semi-skilled jobs.

The highest concentration of SAS workers employed by farm labor contractors is in the **Southeast**.

According to respondents, SAS employees in the **Southeast** are least likely to be covered by Workers' Compensation.

Patterns of employment. Mayans are paid less than the average SAS workers and are employed more for labor centers and crew leaders than directly by the producer. For SAS, almost nine out of ten are employed directly by the producer. SAS workers are paid mostly by the hour and have a median hourly wage of \$4.50. In the 1988 survey for immigrants in Indiantown, the hourly wage was \$4.43 and for the 1989 was \$3.93.

Almost one-half of SAS workers are covered by unemployment insurance. This data agrees with my affirmation that immigrants pay for their social reproduction of labor. But in the case of the Mayans, it is more. In 1988 and 1989, virtually none of them were covered by unemployment insurance. In 1993 a few have started using it. However, the limitation is their semi-legal status.

Employment history and labor supply. Many SAS workers who perform non farm labor prefer it to farm labor. In the case of Mayans, the data are presented in Table 22.

Most SAS workers would be willing to do more SAS work, but the majority are not willing to migrate in search of additional work.

Most SAS workers plan to continue doing SAS work indefinitely unless they become physically unable. Among those intending to leave SAS work, the most common reason given is dissatisfaction with the terms of employment. The last two paragraphs can be compared to the 1989 survey. It reaffirms the affirmation of this thesis that they are not farm workers. They do not have that mentality, at least the majority of them.

SAS workers spend on average 29 weeks, or 60% of their available work time, doing SAS work. These workers also spend fourteen weeks (27% of the year) not working in the United States. The remaining 13% of the year, or seven weeks, is spent doing non-SAS work. This mean is 7.2 months working in farm work, in agreement with my data for the 1989 survey that show a median of 7.7 months working in agriculture for a year for agricultural workers. It also corresponds with the time working in the company, 7.8 months mean and time working in the same activity 7.8 months mean.

### The Maya as Farm Workers

Mayans are not exclusively farm workers as we have seen, but in their relations with the social and legal environment they have things in common: workers unaware of the laws and how to make them work for them. The exploitation of farm workers by the rest of society is similar to the exploitation of informal workers in cities by other classes. As noted before, farm work is the lowest level of labor in the United States in terms of status, wages, and social value.

Half of the employed immigrants in the 1988 sample and more than half in the 1989 sample were agricultural workers, but in 1993 only one-third of them were still agricultural workers. Why did this change? Seen as a social process, in the first years, Mayans had to enter obligatorily into the stream of the migrant farm workers as their only choice for employment at that time. But they have not been caught up in a vicious circle because with experience, development of language skills, and a growing social and economic network of relatives, friends, and countrymen, they find other kinds of jobs. But still, an important proportion of people stay in the farm work which serves as a buffer to unemployment when they lose their jobs after going to Guatemala or for other reasons. In general, Mayans that remain in Blue Camp work in agriculture, and are socially closer to farm workers.

The people who started coming to Indiantown at the beginning of the decade of the 1980s were agricultural workers in Guatemala. The survey of 1988 shows that 83% of those who arrived from 1981 to 1986 came from farming backgrounds and arrived in households of agricultural workers.

Approximately 72% of the immigrants worked in agriculture as their first job, while only 57% were agricultural workers for the fifth they have had, and around 50% were working in agriculture in 1988. Thus, the sequence of their jobs in the United States shows they continue being agricultural workers, although with a tendency to decrease this activity as they accumulate experience as workers.

Percentages of persons engaged in farm labor in Florida varies, of course, by season, with more in the spring and less in the summer. So the actual rate of agriculture work for the Mayans in 1989 varies according to the season of agricultural work, but at least half of them had a job in agriculture during the season.

For the 1989 survey the activities of the immigrants were broken down to get a detailed picture of agricultural as well as nonagricultural ones, as presented in Tables 18 and 19.

Table 18. Jobs in Agriculture in U.S.A

<u>Jobs</u>	<u>1st Job</u>		<u>2nd Job</u>	
	Freq	Per	Freq	Per
Have not done	7	9	27	32
Basic agriculture	6	7	7	9
Picking up vegetables	27	33	5	6
Picking up oranges	6	7	7	9
Nursery worker	4	5	10	12
Picking up tomatoes	14	17	5	6
Picking up chili	7	9	3	4
Picking up fruits	7	9	7	9
Cleaning of fields	1	1	4	5
Picking up cucumbers	2	2	6	7
Picking up tobacco	1	1	1	1
Total	82	100	82	100

Table prepared from 1989 Sample Data

Table 19. Jobs Outside Agriculture

<u>Jobs</u>	<u>1st Job</u>		<u>2nd Job</u>	
	Freq	Perc	Freq	Perc
Construction auxiliary	43	53	1	1
Golf course worker	5	6	7	9
Landscaping	1	1	1	1
Waver or sewer	1	1	-	-
Chicken packing	2	2	1	1
Meat packing	1	1	-	-
Tractor operator	-	-	1	1
Have not done	29	36	71	87
Total	82	100	82	100

Table prepared from 1989 Sample Data

The current activity of the immigrants for the end of the season in 1989 shows a diversity of occupations.

Nursery workers were only one out of eleven of the

agricultural workers, while the bulk of agricultural activities were harvest activities, and only 1% worked as supervisors or crew leaders.

For the nonagricultural work, construction, golf courses, and landscaping--an activity in which many would later work--were the main activities. Some other activities as packing operator and driver mean the immigrants were trying to diversify the pool of their skills to move to other occupations. In general, Mayans are not part-time workers. In 1989 only four of them had more than one job, being the combined activities of golf courses and landscaping.

Table 20 presents a detailed account of the activities of the immigrants at the end of the 1988-1989 season, and a comparison of activities for the 1988, 1989, and 1993 surveys follows in Table 21.

Table 20. Work Activities 1988-1989 Season

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Landscaping	5	6
Golf course worker	6	7
Nursery worker	4	5
Construction auxiliary	17	21
Picking up chili	6	7
Picking up vegetables	33	42
Carpenter	1	1
Picking up tomatoes	1	1
Picking up oranges	1	1
Car or truck driver	3	4
Chicken or vegetables packer	3	4
Farm administrator	1	1
Total	81	100

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Table prepared from 1989 Sample Data

Table 21. Mayan Work Activities in 1988, 1989, and 1993

<u>Activities</u>	<u>1988</u>		<u>1989</u>		<u>1993</u>	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Landscaping	4	5	5	6	8	28
Golf course worker	10	11	6	7	6	20
Nursery worker	9	10	4	5	2	7
Construction aid	7	8	17	21	-	-
Picking up chili	3	3	6	7	-	-
Picking up vegetables	8	9	33	42	-	-
Carpenter	-	-	1	1	-	-
Picking up tomatoes	-	-	1	1	-	-
Picking up oranges	16	19	1	1	-	-
Car or truck driver	-	-	3	4	-	-
Tractor or machine operator	8	9	-	-	-	-
Chicken or vegetables packer	-	-	3	4	1	3
Farm administrator	-	-	1	1	-	-
Sewer or garment worker	4	5	-	-	-	-
Social worker 2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Teacher	1	1	-	-	1	3
Agriculture general tasks	5	6	-	-	6	21
Picking up fruits	1	1	-	-	-	-
Welder	1	1	-	-	-	-
Crew leader	2	2	-	-	-	-
Baby sitter	2	2	-	-	-	-
Maid house cleaner or keeper	2	2	-	-	1	3
Informal food seller	1	1	-	-	1	3
Restaurant aid	3	3	-	-	-	-
Tapestry maker	-	-	-	-	1	3
Lake care worker	-	-	-	-	1	3
Blue collar worker	-	-	-	-	1	3
Clerk, sending money to G	-	-	-	-	1	3
Total	89	100	81	100	30	100

The data of 1993, taken at the end of 1992-1993 season, shows that less than one-third of workers are currently working in agriculture. As the sample for this year also included people living in West Palm Beach, it should be noted that the percentage for Indiantown was higher: 31% for Indiantown and 23% for West Palm Beach.



What this means is that Mayans not only were able to break out of the vicious cycle of farm work where, historically, farm workers are in that whirlpool where they remain for several years, or even a generation or more (see Mohl 1981: 156, and Brown 1972: 301). The Mayans also have transcended their background as agricultural workers in their homeland. It does not mean an automatic improvement in their work conditions or better wages, however, but a tendency to break through to other low-paying jobs in the region.

#### Getting out of farm work

Those immigrants who were agricultural workers in 1989 were asked if they planned to continue working in agriculture or not. More than half (57%) of the Mayans working in agriculture said that they wanted to move out of it. In Table 22 a comparison of reasons for saying yes or not to agriculture work is presented.

Table 22. Mayans Saying Yes or No to Future Farm Work  
1989

Saying No 57%

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<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
It is too exhausting	5	18
To improve wages	4	14
Looking for stability	7	25
To diversify skills	7	25
It is not adequate	4	14
He/she does not like it	1	4
<hr/>		
Total	28	100

Saying Yes 43%

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<u>Reason</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
It is all she/he can get	15	75
She/he likes it	5	25
<hr/>		
Total	40	100

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The activities they want to do when they come out of agriculture are presented in Table 23.

Table 23. Mayan Employment Preferences 1989

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Small store or food business	17	30
Tailor or carpenter workshop	10	19
Golf course or landscaping	8	15
Mechanic or machine operator	5	9
Working in factory or construction	4	7
Clerk in a store	3	6
Nursery	2	4
Artistic or cultural activities	2	4
Any other but agriculture	3	6
<hr/>		
Total	54	100

It also was asked for how long they expected to continue working in agriculture. The answers are presented in Table 24.

Table 24. For How Long Mayans Planned to Remain in Agricultural Jobs, 1989

<u>Period</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Less than one year	12	24
Between 1 and 3 years	4	8
Between 3 and 5 years	5	10
More than five years	2	4
As long as they can	28	54
<hr/>		
Total	51	100

It is possible to say that half pictured their future continuing working in agriculture while the other half were trying to walk out of that work in the immediate or not-too-

distant future. Of these, half of them were really anxious to abandon agricultural work within a year.

In order to perceive the patterns of induction into other kinds of work, it was asked if they have close relatives or close friends in nonagricultural jobs. Only 37% answered yes, and 63% said no. Thus, most of them were trying to leave agricultural work and find other jobs on their own, without social networks assistance. A cross-tabulation between expressed desires to abandon agricultural work and having close relatives and friends in nonagricultural jobs confirms this assumption.

#### The Social Reproduction of Labor Force

##### Mayans Working in the United States

As stated, the mean of the year of arrival was 1981 for the respondents of the 1989 survey and 1986 for the ones of the 1989 survey. There are two different waves of Mayan immigrants included in this study, those coming from 1981 to 1986 and others coming after 1986, with both groups entering farm work in the United States and coming from farm backgrounds in Guatemala. As also was said, it is important to note that it is very different to do basic farming in Guatemala and to become a migrant farm worker in the United States.

On first arrival in the United States, two out of three Mayans were picking oranges and vegetables, and as they

started looking for other activities, nursery work was most desired along with landscaping and golf course work. These activities are related to agriculture in terms of activity but with advantages in terms of stability, status, and not being as tiring as farm work. The data of the 1988 survey show that the percentage of people working in those jobs increases continually. Nevertheless, in 1988 about half of the immigrants still considered the picking of oranges and vegetables the expected employment.

It is clear that after a while, migrant farm work becomes an experience almost nobody wants to continue doing if it is possible to avoid it. It continues to be the kind of job many hold upon first arrival or after coming back from trips to visit Guatemala or to bring their families to the United States. In some cases they have become seasonal workers going back and forth for periods of one or two years between Florida and Guatemala.

#### The strategy of geographic mobility to find work

The data of 1988 survey show that for their first activity in U.S.A., half of the immigrants performed it in Indiantown, and slightly more in Martin County. In the survey groups, approximately 60% started working in Florida, while 20% began in California and fewer in Arizona (8%), Texas (6%), and others states. A picture of the agricultural regions where Mayans began working is shown in Figure 1-4.

The immigrants also go to other places to work in the planting and harvesting of vegetables and fruits in the North. From Florida they go to California, South Carolina, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Idaho, Colorado, Oregon and Virginia. Although it should be noted that approximately one-quarter of them migrated to other states, an additional 15% went to work in other places within Florida itself, moving temporarily from Indiantown because it was out of the range of approximately two hours they sometimes traveled daily to work (see time spent daily in going to work, Chapter Four).

The path of internal migrations can be seen for the year April 1988-1989 period that begins when the agriculture season ends in the places the immigrants are working and covers a whole year. A graphic picture of the agricultural regions where the Mayans worked in the 1988-1989 season also is shown in Figure 1-4.

In that year 24% of the people interviewed moved internally in the United States to work in agriculture. More than half (57%) were then agricultural workers, and if we discount the ones who were working in nurseries where the work is more stable, then almost half (47%) of the ones working in seasonal agriculture moved to other states. It is a very high percentage of mobility in comparison with the NAWS data.

The places where they worked were many, in total 26, in 10 different states. Most of them have moved to only one

place, but 40% of those who moved went to two different places, 15% to three, and 10% to four. Again, it confirms the pattern of mobility to go and move where the possibility to earn some money is available and the risks, no matter how difficult it is to cope with them, are accepted.

Furthermore, Mayans working in agriculture were more mobile than other SAS workers. According to NAWS data (United States Department of Labor 1991: 81-85) and to Mohl (1981: 160), farm workers tend to travel along streams, that is, highly patterned routes. The Atlantic Coast stream runs north from Florida through the Atlantic Coast states to Maine. The data presented in Figure 1-4 indicate that Mayans in 1988-1989 followed a significantly wider pathway, indeed, leaving the traditional stream to go as far away as Oregon and Washington.

The consequences of this pattern, although positive in terms of survival, are also detrimental for the possibilities of education for them and their children and include the need to expend income on the costs of starting again in each place and constantly living in rudimentary conditions. Furthermore, it is the way the immigrants pay for the social reproduction of the economic system twice. They absorb the costs of periods of unemployment and become the most flexible part of the system, filling the economic spaces that need to be filled.

### Coping with Unemployment

In the 1988 survey it was found that the mean time looking for employment upon arrival was 28 days, or four weeks. So, from the beginning, the time, money, and effort spent for accommodations and for looking for a job rested upon the savings of the immigrants. Because almost all of them arrive without resources or in debt, costs are paid with the savings of the social network against the promise of the future earnings of the worker.

At the end of the season when work is scarce, the farm workers have weeks when they are employed only two or three days a week, or none. Table 25 summarizes the days Mayan immigrants and their spouses (male and female) had worked in different periods.

Table 25. Days Worked by Mayans by Week, Month, and Three-Month Periods, Immigrants and Spouses in 1988 and Immigrants in 1989

<u>Period</u>	<u>Summer 1988</u>		<u>Spring 1989</u>
	<u>Immigrant</u>	<u>Spouse</u>	<u>Immigrant</u>
Last week	3.3	4.2	4.3
Last month	13	16	17
Last three months	51	48	54

Immigrants worked an average of 75% of the time during the week prior to the survey: 69% of the previous month and 58% of the past three months, at the moment of the



interviews. At least 35% of the time in the three-month period, they were out of work. Of course, the unemployment level increases as the end of the season approaches, as seen in the Summer 1988 data. The spouse data show a contrary pattern, as the work of the spouses increases at the end of the season, a trait that make sense as a household strategy.

It should be noted that the declining work at season's end also means a decrease in the real wage earned. For 1988 the mean of wages was \$943.55 for a month period. But in reality, this was only \$754.84, or less than the minimum wage, if we discount the days not worked. Similarly, for 1989 the nominal wage of \$836 per month was really only \$694, which is less than the minimum wage of \$4.35 an hour would have paid over the same period.

Even in the high season of agricultural work, they are subsidizing the farming system at work in the region. This pattern also extends to other areas such as construction enterprises and other intermittent jobs, since in all cases the semi-legal Mayans do not receive any fringe benefits or qualify for welfare assistance in slack periods. By keeping the system working in this way, the poor immigrants provide a direct subsidy to the farmers and the public. It is the reverse of the ideological stereotype that Mayan immigrants are taking jobs from American citizens at a cost to tax-paying citizens.

Also, for the 1989 survey in terms of unemployment, the mean was 1.9 periods of at least 15 days without work in the past two years, and 27% of them have had between three and more than six of those periods of unemployment. Checking that information from another point, the workers were asked how many months they worked in the last year, April-March. The mean was 7.7 months.

The typical farm labor work periods show consistency in the shortness of employment, confirming the seasonality and instability of jobs. It should be noted that this pattern is also in concordance with that of many Guatemalans in their homeland.

While the mean duration for jobs at the time of the interview is 26 months, the time workers had stayed with their current boss or enterprise is one year and seven months (19 months). It is more likely that the worker remains in the same activity but changes bosses. If it is compared to the time in the United States of approximately five years with the two in a job, the instability is evident.

### The Path to the Job

And yet another example of the "hidden" manner in which workers subsidize their employment is the network that from the point of view of the workers provides information and connections that permit them to find a job, a place of

refuge, or to build some savings to invest in their homeland. From the perspective of the landlords and farm enterprise owners, the "free network" provides them with a flow of cheap, quiet, hard workers. Although, not surprisingly, the main components of the network are always relatives, friends, and countrymen, a closer look at it (comparing the way they found their first job and how they looked for the current one in the 1988 survey) shows an increase in individual initiative where, for current work, approximately one-quarter of the workers found the job shopping around for themselves.

Comparing the surveys of the two years, in 1989 again many of the contacts for finding a job were found among relatives and countrymen. The later survey showed that over one-third of them (35%) said it was through friends that they found their jobs. The labor centers were the first step for some of the workers toward a job, but the percentage diminishes through time as workers develop their own resources, as the case of Leonidas shows.

### The Employers

For the 1989 survey, it was found that more than half (59%) of the Mayans worked for big enterprises or labor centers. In agriculture, the most workers (70%) worked in only five enterprises, and they accounted for 40% of the whole sample.

The labor centers are work pools that provide a work force for the crew leaders or enterprises, enlisting the people on a daily basis. For the large agribusiness enterprises it means they do not have to worry about to hiring, pay for any overhead expenses, welfare, or insurance. The labor recruitment centers operate with the fee they charge to the workers for their services, which in many cases can amount to more than one-third of the wages earned. In the case of Pepe (see Chapter Four) in West Palm Beach, the company gives the Center \$60 daily for Pepe 's work, while he receives only \$34, \$4.25 per hour. In this case the discount is 44% of the original wage. Also, they almost never pay for injury insurance or other kind of protection for the workers.

For the workers, being affiliated with the labor center does not guarantee daily work every day, although it is probable they can get it. As such, it is a kind of whirlpool from which the worker tries to escape as soon as possible. Working with a labor center means having to wake up early in the morning, spend more time traveling to the fields or place of work, earning less, and not belonging to a corporate enterprise where they can have some benefits, not to mention stability. The ones that after some time remain in these circumstances are not considered good workers, or are too old, weak, or vulnerable because their status is precarious. That was the mentioned case of Pepe

in Apartment 8 in West Palm Beach (see Chapter Four). In many cases the bosses or crew leaders, after testing a worker, talk directly to the worker and bypass the labor center. Table 26 lists the various enterprises where the immigrants surveyed worked in 1989.

Table 26. Enterprises Where the Immigrants Were Working in 1989

N = 50		
<u>Name</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Dubois Farms	Vegetables	30
Jack and Martin Farms	Vegetables	30
Land Harvesting	Landscape	8
Road Landscape	Landscape	4
Mecca Farms	Vegetables	4
Freshman Creek	Golf club	4
Three Brothers	Nursery	4
Files	Vegetables	2
Cypress Links	Landscape	2
Gazebo	Landscape	2
Sunshine Lands. Inc	Landscape	2
Loboly Pines	Golf course	2
Palm Beach Polo Club	Polo y golf	2
Labor Source	Labor pool	2
Labor Center	Labor pool	2
Total		100

In summary, 69% of the people surveyed were working in agriculture, 19% in landscaping, 8% on golf courses, and only 4% were affiliated with labor centers.

Most of the workers do not work in Indiantown, but rather in the farms, golf courses, construction places, condos and residences, or packing plants in the Stuart and

West Palm Beach areas. In this sense, Indiantown can be considered a dormitory town from which they commute.

The immigrants also were asked about the places they want to work. The places where the Mayans were working and also the ones where they preferred to work in 1989 are presented in Table 27 and in Figure 1-6. Only 12% of them worked in Martin County, while 88% worked in Palm Beach County.

Table 27. Places In Martin and Palm Beach Counties Where Mayans Were Working and Prefer to Work

<u>Places</u>	<u>Working</u>		<u>Want to Work</u>	
	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Boynton Beach	25	43	4	8
Jupiter	17	29	12	24
Stuart	5	9	11	21
Boca Raton	5	8	-	-
Indiantown	-	-	9	17
Delray Beach	3	5	-	-
West Palm Beach	1	2	7	13
Leybel	1	2	-	-
Fort Meyers	1	2	-	-
Any in Florida	-	-	9	17
Total	58	100	51	100

#### Preference of Jobs, Enterprises, and Places for Work

Related to the way Mayans perceive their work possibilities are the reasons they had for continuing to work in some enterprises. Although the main reasons listed

were material benefits from salary to housing, food, transportation, and insurance, job stability and good treatment were also noted. Inability to get a better job because of the competition was the major reason for remaining in a particular job. In Table 28 the distribution of these reasons is shown. It is important to note that the reasons for staying with a job were essentially negative in character: other jobs were worse, more exhausting, or too competitive.

Table 28. Reasons for Staying in the Current Job, 1989

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
Wages	6	76	82
Stability	15	67	82
Good treatment	9	73	82
No too exhausting	16	66	82
Have relatives or friends in	8	74	82
There are worst ones	15	67	82
Too much competence outside	30	52	82

Slightly more than half of the immigrants, 51%, said in 1989 they wanted to keep working with the same boss or crew leader. Job security is the main reason for staying with a present job or to find another. Also, the desire for improvement and especially to diversify skills is indicative again of the mobility of the Mayans in search for a better life. The reasons for staying or not staying in a current job are shown in Table 29.

Table 29. Migrant Satisfaction with Present Employment, 1989

## A. Immigrants Who Wish to Continue in a Current Job: 51%

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
Job stability/security	12	29
Good treatment	7	17
Not tiresome	4	9
There are worst jobs	1	2
Can't get another	11	26
Two or more reasons	7	17
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Total	42	100

## B. Immigrants Who Wish to Find a New Job: 49%

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>
To improve wages	10	26
Job instability	16	41
To diversify one's skills	2	5
Job is too exhausting	3	8
Doesn't like the boss	2	5
Two or more reasons	6	15
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Total	39	100

Wages

The interest in achieving a better socioeconomic status is integral to the whole economic process. Wages in the United States are, even if diminished by one's illegal status and by long unpaid periods of unemployment, more than 10 times what a worker is paid in the highlands or the coast in Guatemala, and more than 5 times what they are paid in Mexico. So, it is perhaps the single, most attractive point



for the workers. It also means that you have to work less to buy goods considered desirable, both here and there, such as cars, television sets, video players, and so on. Those "high" wages also allow immigrants through good management, to save by using some strategy, to buy land, houses, and cars both in their hometowns and Florida. Thus, they tolerate living in a house or apartment with many others, supporting one another.

As in many places in Mexico, the effects of the money from migrants is starting to change the towns in Huehuetenango and other areas in Guatemala. But once the families are here, they no longer think about this "plus value" difference, as it happens to all of us who come from a Third World country, because we have to think about and cope with the demands here.

It also should be noted that this behavior follows a *collective planning* that in many ways reflects the cultural background of the Mayans. People outside the Mayan community may miss this because they differ in behavior. Nevertheless, one can appreciate the effects of *collective planning* that is widely used in the "do it yourself" housing in Bogotá, Lima, and other Latin American cities. And, of course, the combination of money and "know how" encourages immigrants to go home and return with their families, in many cases illegally. So, it is also this imbalance of wages, here and there, however poor they seem to Americans,

that encourages immigrants to settle down in the United States despite national cultural loyalties.

The mean of wages for the 1988 sample in Indiantown, for both men and women, was \$943.55 per month or \$4.43 per hour, while the wage for their spouses was \$836.60 or 3.93 an hour. For the 1989 survey the mean wage was \$835 or \$3.93 for hour. However, it was not evenly distributed. Fifty-three per cent earned less than \$800, 32% made between \$800 and \$900; and 15% made \$900 or more. The base wage in 1993 yielded \$4.25 by hour. As noted before, the earnings should be saved for times when they are not working. Thus, the real wage is actually about 70% of the total earned when spread over the time it must be used. A summary of wages is presented in Table 30.

Table 30. Wages

	<u>1988</u>		<u>1989</u>	
	<u>Month</u>	<u>Hour</u>	<u>Month</u>	<u>Hour</u>
Immigrant	943	4.43	835	3.39
Spouse	836	3.39	-	-
<u>Distribution</u>		<u>Percent</u>		
Up \$800		53		
Between \$800 and \$900		32		
More than \$900		15		

In addition, 12% received bonuses or other kinds of extra payments in 1989. This included money from the boss directly (but not the crew leader) and/or a christmas gift,

a tip (half of the cases), or a food supplement. For the people receiving a bonus, it meant an extra income of \$24 monthly, on average, or 3% of the wage.

### Circulation of Capital and Consumerism

In order to have a more comprehensive insight into how Mayans are saving and circulating money, in 1989 a set of questions was asked about the acquisition of goods in United States and in Guatemala. Over one-third (35%) said they have acquired a parcel or land lot in Guatemala, but none in the U.S., and none had acquired a mobile home in U.S. In addition, 35% also had bought a house in Guatemala but had not done so in the U.S. Nevertheless, as noted in Chapter Four, Mayans are currently (1994) buying houses in Indiantown. One of the items in which they invested as both a strategy for survival and diversification of work was a business in Guatemala; 20% said they have established some type of small store or business in their hometown.

Table 31. Number of Mayans Immigrants Acquiring Property, 1989

<u>Kind of Good</u>	<u>Property Acquired</u>		
	<u>In U.S.A.</u>	<u>In Homeland</u>	<u>Not Adq.</u>
Plot of land	-	26	49
House	-	26	49
Store or business	1	15	59
Have acquired: Yes	46 (61%)	No	29 (39%)

The impact on small towns in Guatemala is potentially great. Felix, a tailor who worked in Los Angeles and in Homestead, Florida, and who lives in the house of his cousin Elvia (the wife of Mario) is illustrative. He says that he, his uncle, and two other relatives have purchased houses on the main plaza of the hometown and are now in positions of much greater social influence there, as a result. It seems clear from this case and many others we could cite, that there are people learning to live actually in two worlds that become increasingly interdependent. Guatemalan society now has an increasingly influential colony.

In regard to the acquisition of vehicles by immigrants in Indiantown, for the 1988 sample, 63% of the households had at least one vehicle. A fact was noted in the difficulty in parking at the Saturday mass and at the soccer games on weekends. Bicycles are not as popular as cars in Indiantown, and only 22% of the households had one, while 5% had two and 2% had three. This proportion seems not to have

increased since 1988. My perception is that the number of bicycles is even fewer in the West Palm Beach area, and I did not see one among the Mayans while I was there in 1993.

It should be noted that some things are not purchased because they consider it to be a waste of money. For example, they now are accustomed to doing laundry with machines instead of washing clothes by hand as is common throughout Latin America. While they may buy a washing machine to have in the house instead of going to the dirty launderette in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, they consider dryers a waste of money, preferring to dry clothes in the house yards, in the same style they do in Guatemala.

Most of the immigrants (58%) answered in 1988 that they did the grocery shopping in the supermarkets of Indiantown, while 40% in the supermarkets of Stuart, mainly at Publix. Most of them, 83%, did weekly shopping, while 10% did it daily, mostly the recent arrivals.

Shopping generally is a collective activity. Approximately two out of three do the shopping in the company of someone else, mainly relatives or friends. In my observations in West Palm Beach in the single person male households where I stayed, everyone shopped and cooked separately. Although they may go shopping in small groups, these men keep their food separately in the common living quarters.

Only one out of four persons (23%) in 1988 said they used the bank to save money. These data are confirmed by the numerous cases of Guatemalans being robbed because they keep the money on their persons. It is not uncommon even in 1994 to have people carrying as much as \$1,000 to \$1,500--all of their savings. Recently, since June 1993, a campaign by the Indiantown bank has been very successful in gaining Guatemalans to become clients.

Complementarily, Guatemalans send money to their homeland. In 1988 most of them, three out of four, said they sent money orders to their families, but this turned out to be a dangerous procedure because some lost the money even as they were trying to send it. Since then, use of private special agencies has increased greatly, these being located in Stuart, West Palm Beach, and Miami. Currently, there are two agencies in Indiantown competing to gain the trust of Guatemalans and other immigrants in the brisk business of sending money and other commodities.

#### Worker Benefits

A picture of these benefits is presented in Table 32, where the survey indicated that only 11% of workers were recipients of such largess. Perhaps the Guatemalans are entitled to a lot more, but as they are unaware of their rights or influenced by the fear of their *semi-legal* status, they do not ask for them.

Table 32. Work Benefits Received by Mayans, 1989

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Receiving one or more: Yes 11%				
No 89%				
Benefit	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Don't</u>	<u>Total</u>
			<u>know</u>	
Persons with no benefits		89%		
Persons receiving benefits	11%			
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Medical insurance	8	60	14	82
Paid holidays	11	55	16	82
Paid vacations	10	51	21	82
Illness compensation	7	58	17	82
Life insurance	4	55	23	82
Emergency loans	11	58	13	82
Advances on wages	7	58	17	82
Unemployment payment	7	55	20	82
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In order to have a broader perspective of the use immigrants make of available services or benefits, in 1989 we asked if the households had used any of a list of services over a two-year period. As expected, a large number answered that they applied for no benefits at all, while an additional 31% said they were not aware of the possibilities. The responses about specific services were very low, as shown in Table 33. This is particularly interesting because of the popular American assumption that immigrants like the Mayans are "abusing" the welfare and entitlement system. Here we show that this has not been the case, even after nine years in the United States.

Table 33. Benefits Received by Mayan Households, 1989

<u>Status</u>	<u>Freq</u>	<u>Perc</u>	
Never applied	34	41	
Received one or more	23	28	
Not aware	25	31	
<hr/>			
Total	82	100	
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<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>
Help to family with children	15	67	82
Food stamps (WIC)	4	78	82
Welfare	6	76	82

A similar pattern was found relative to work accidents or illness. In 1989, 19% reported having had work-related accidents or illness. Of them, 40% had medical insurance and 60% received medical attention. This means that most of them were not covered by medical insurance, and also that many did not receive medical attention. Once again, this loss was assumed in most cases by the workers and their households at no cost as such to employers (67%). This is yet another way in which the workers underwrite employers' profits while paying for work-derived problems.

Another kind of accident was that of Tomás, one of the workers living in a house where I stayed in Indiantown in 1993. He suffered an accident on a soccer field, badly injuring his knee. His personal insurance covered 80% of the costs of the surgery and hospitalization. The other 20% was covered by his companions in the household, who also



gave him food and helped cover other basic expenses, such as not charging him for rent or utilities, because he did not receive any wages for the three weeks he was not working. He was even grateful that the boss hired him again for the job when he recovered from the accident.

### Mayans Stand Up for Their Rights: The Gazebo Strike of 1993

Several advocates point out the submissiveness of Mayans and their willingness to take jobs that other people would not. And many of the local tales of the Mayans would confirm this assumption. However, while working in Corn Maya Office in Indiantown in 1993, I perceived that times were changing in respect to how it was in 1988 or 1989. While some workers wanted to file complaints against their bosses, especially noteworthy was the "Gazebo Strike" in 1993, which demonstrated that Mayans were able to stand up for their rights against a landscape firm that employed them.

I had the opportunity to witness the process because the workers involved went to Corn Maya Office to ask for some advice. When asked to help, I called a lawyer who had been presenting Mayan immigrant cases to the I.N.S. for the last 10 years to clarify some of the issues. In a meeting held in June 6, 1993, the following was determined.

The main complaints of the workers were:

1. The last holiday was not paid, contrary to what had been promised.
2. The company was paying \$5 an hour, but not making any increase after a period of three months as was promised. After a year the increase had been only 30 cents.
3. Guatemalans did not have any promotions, which had all gone to white employees.
4. They had fired people without prior notice.
5. The company was charging \$8 weekly for the work uniforms.
6. The company was charging \$15 weekly for rides to work and back home, which was too much, especially when the company was expected to pay for it. There were 32 workers that went from Indiantown to a Jupiter work site.
7. The company was making a kind of "lottery" at the end of each month to determine which groups would receive a bonus. If any of their members had an accident, the entire group was excluded. Instead of having a lottery, they wanted all workers to have some increase in their wages. Fortunately, they were covered for accident insurance.
8. The company did not pay overtime, compensating instead by requiring less work on some other day.

9. Workers wanted to have the following safety equipment: goggles for the eyes; protection from noise; support belts for the back; and raincoats.
10. Workers did not have any break besides that at lunch, working from 7 to 12 a.m. and from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. They wanted a break in the middle of the morning.

The landscaping company employed about 50 workers, of whom 35 were Guatemalans (most of them Mayans), 15 Americans, and a few Mexicans.

The lawyer determined that two complaints were the most important: the one about overtime wages and the discriminatory policy about promotions.

On the day of their meeting, the workers did not go to work, but after long deliberation they agreed to continue working on the next day and to present the list of their petitions to the supervisor. The next day the boss talked directly with them and said that nobody was going to be fired and that the company would study the petitions and make salary increases. The one-day strike was considered a success. After a two-month period, it was revealed that the company actually had fired two of the leaders with little excuse, but still the workers thought the strike was a success mainly because it showed that they could stand up for their rights and get some improvement in their working conditions and wages.

### Work Organization

There are several factors working against the possibility of developing unions or other labor organizations among the immigrants in Indiantown and West Palm Beach. The first is the lack of tradition and experience with that kind of organization in their towns in Guatemala. Secondly, the difficulty for developing any trade unions and labor organizations in general in Florida is well known. But perhaps the most important factor in this case is the illegality or *semi-legality* of the workers that does not allow most of them to belong to a trade union or take part in a any protest. Still, in the 1988 survey (that includes Mexican workers), one-quarter of them consider themselves belonging to some kind of organization, and one-third belonged to a union, which is certainly significant in Florida.

Most of the organizations in Indiantown and West Palm Beach have been ethnic or religious organizations, which are a very important part of the life of the people

### Work and Ethnicity in 1993

In 1993 through the Immigrant Adjustment and Interethnic Relations in South Florida research, with the support of National Science Foundation and while working for Drs. Allan Burns and David Griffith, I was able to carry out many additional interviews in Indiantown and West Palm

Beach, and was able to examine the course of changes over the past four years. During this span of time I made note of the following trends and conditions.

Trying to explain the barriers that keep the workers from moving to better jobs, most of them (73%) said their main obstacle is the English language; being functionally illiterate even in Spanish, English is crucial for being able to have a job higher than at the bottom of the labor pool. They perceive and understand that. But a meaningful minority (20%) said they do not want a better job, and some said they do not perceive a language barrier to having better jobs. To find better ones is a matter of purpose and determination.

The main activity for more than half (53%) of the Mayans in their homeland was agriculture, but sizable minorities did other things such as being students, teachers, bookkeepers, masons, and practical nurses. It is important to note that one-third were not manual workers at all, this constituting a major difference as compared with the immigrants interviewed in 1988 and 1989.

One big shift in immigrants' work activities found in 1993 was that the number of them working in agriculture has dropped from more than one-half in the 1988 and 1989 surveys to less than one-third (27%) in 1993. It is not the same for the workers in Indiantown and West Palm Beach, however. More agriculture workers were found in Indiantown (31%) than

in West Palm Beach (23%). The number of farm workers would be even fewer if I excluded the nursery workers from the agriculture category. Greater job diversification was also found with activities like tapestry making, housekeeper, store clerk, and blue collar worker (see Table 21, above). This diversification is more evident in West Palm Beach. Most of the immigrants have been working for periods of up to two years, and only one out of four for more than three years in the current job.

Complementarily, and indicative of the mobility of the immigrants, were the reasons for changing jobs. None of them indicated being fired or laid off. On the contrary, more than half (57%) said the reason they changed jobs was to improve their working situation with respect to wages or other benefits, or even to be closer to the places they want to be. Job mobility thus remained very high, with only 7% saying that they had not changed jobs.

Around 7% of the informants in 1993 said they had been injured on job. Of those, most said they had been fairly treated in the situation. Compared with the data in 1989, the proportion of the injured persons has greatly declined. Also important was the sense of being discriminated against on the job. In 1993, one out of six felt that they had been unfairly treated because of their ethnic origin.

Most of the informants reported they had not had any government assistance or work benefits. Only one out of

five said they received fringe benefits, but that figure, in comparison with the survey in 1989, is almost double (see Table 33). This makes sense if with time they become more aware of the benefits they are entitled to and less fearful of asking for them. It should be noted, however, that if we take the household into consideration, and not just the individual as it was in 1989, the percentage of the benefits utilized increases greatly.

The ethnicity of the owner was anglo in most of the cases (80%), and in very few cases was Guatemalan, Jewish, Italian, Cuban, or Puerto Rican. The ethnic background of the supervisor was anglo in the majority of the cases (37%), and together with Mexicans made for more than half of the immediate bosses. Other ethnicities mentioned for the bosses were Chicano, Guatemalan, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Mayan. In the big companies the supervisor and the owner are not the same, being, in general, an anglo owner and a Mexican or other Hispanic supervisor. In the small companies they are the same, in most cases of anglo origin.

The language spoken by the supervisor was Spanish in two out of three cases, and English in the other. Only in very few cases were the supervisors Mayan. The language most used at work is Spanish, while 20% used English and 13% used a Mayan language.

For the 1993 survey, none of the informants had ever belonged to a union or similar organization in their

homeland or in the United States. No union was reported to be at work among the Mayans or even among the Mexicans and green card holders. It is fair to say that they are far from this possibility, not only because of their own precarious positions but also because of the laws of Florida.

Increasingly, however, there are complaints about the work place. One out of four said that there are individual protests from time to time, but with no action taken or solution provided. Only one of the informants in 1993 reported having used an agency to solve a discrimination or labor problem. Some of the immigrants, however, said they had attended a meeting or demonstration, referring to the "Posadas" episode of 1988 (see Appendix B), the only collective protest or demonstration they could recall.



## CHAPTER SIX FUTURE AND POSSIBILITIES

The orientation and general direction of the process of acculturation and social adjustment occurring in Martin and Palm Beach counties is underscored, including the vision of the future according to people of the different ethnic groups in Indiantown. The ethnographic insight of how the different groups of people perceive what the others are going to do and what the future for the whole town and region might be will provide a picture of how are they doing now. Class differences in this context are meaningful; it is not the same to talk about the situation as it is to share the street with the immigrants.

The most conspicuous issue here relates to what I refer to as the "Maya Phoenix" (see Appendix A)--what it means to lose everything, but then regain it all and even more in totally new ways. The path of this reconstruction is plagued by many problems, some of them internal antagonisms among the Mayas, and others due to a lack of experience in the United States. The fluorescence of Mayan ethnic organizations or in which the Maya participate in Indiantown and West Palm Beach and develop rivalries among them is an indication of the phenomena even as the Maya Phoenix has grown bigger and spread

over Martin and Palm Beach Counties and to Immokalee, with a network reaching to Texas and California.

Other shortcomings are the product of the inadequacy of the scope of the solutions to the problems created by the immigration process as initiated at the local or regional levels or with agencies and institutions that lack the flexibility necessary to cope with the needs of the immigrants and the old residents. The problems in many instances will be solved by the people themselves, but this, of course, will take time.

As a nation of immigrants, an understanding of the process of assimilation is crucial to anyone seeking to comprehend America's unique society and national character. A discussion of the various interpretations of the "integration process" as it has worked in the United States will help to understand the present and future of the Mayans of Indiantown and the Treasure Coast of Florida, in terms of ethnicity and immigration.

#### The Process of Acculturation and Integration in United States

We start with a chronological perspective. According with Vecoli, the neo-nativism of the '80s and '90s is indicative of a periodic resurgence of nationalism and conservatism. The rediscovery of ethnicity in the 1960s followed hard upon a period of intense pressures for national unity engendered by World War II and the Cold War. While in

the '60s the mainstream was the Melting Pot and the assimilation process, at the end of that decade and in the '70s, the stress was put on the pluralism. More doctoral dissertations, he says, were written in historical fields during the 1970s than in all preceding decades combined. The concept of ethnicity has become one of the basic categories of historical analysis, and pluralism is generally accepted as the paradigm for the American past (Vecoli 1985: 14-16).

### The Debate

Focusing on the subject of assimilation, Olivier Zunz (1985) states that historians at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s were more concerned with social justice rather than with assimilation, "which can be described as the vision of an increasingly unified society" (Zunz 1985: 54). They, says Zunz, also realized that social mobility is an illusion that undermines the perception of America as a land of opportunity. In the middle of the 1970s, under the impetus of ethnic revival, historians showed the strength and adaptability of groups that traditionally had been considered alienated from society. They revealed that the immigrant derived dignity from his position in his own world and not through that of the social worker, the friendly visitor, of the naturalizing judge (Zunz 1985: 54-55).

In regard to governmental policies, after a brief period of pluralism, the policy of the United States returned to the

"Melting Pot," through the '80s and early '90s, stressing assimilation and free competition among all individuals to even things out. Ethnic diversity, however, continues to flourish. As Vecoli says, for good or for ill, ethnicity is not a transitory phenomenon but an enduring dimension of American society (Vecoli 1985:16-17) and other societies as well.

### Assimilation and Pluralism

The various advances in the knowledge of migrants' behavior and their contributions make it difficult to return to the assimilationist view inherent in the majority of mobility studies. But there also are limitations inherent in the view of a pluralistic America, fragmented into an endless number of autonomous and diverse communities and populations. A plausible solution to this dilemma, Zunz (1985) suggests, is to view these two perspectives as complementary, not contradictory. Ethnicity is best understood, he says, within a framework of generations. To understand the relationship between pluralism and assimilation, it is necessary to look at them in the context of constant social change. Zunz states that a broad understanding of assimilation demands that we do not allow social theory or political ideology exclusively to guide our understanding of the balance of class, ethnicity, and power.

I would argue that we can more effectively penetrate the process of assimilation in American society by defining

those large-scale factors that cut across lines of ethnic, economic, or political loyalty to influence people's lives. For assimilation is not a constant, but varies according to the interplay of outside conditions. (Zunz 1985: 63)

### Assimilation or Integration?

Zunz gives several conceptualizations of assimilation. He says that assimilation can be considered not as a shift from minority to majority status, but as a "collaborative" process which involves the whole population. This means that immigrants change the society, just as they are changed. They are creative in a true process of acculturation. Drawing from the work of anthropologists, historians also have shown that ethnicity may be a quality which owes as much to the circumstances of settlement in a new country as it does to the culture imported from the old. The strategies that enabled partly imported subcultures to grow and live semi-autonomously in a new country helped mitigate conflicts perhaps as much as the relative openness of the social system. It seems clear, for example, that immigrants had more opportunities and could develop a more complex social structure in cities where they often were the first settlers.

Earlier in his book Assimilation in American Life (1964), Milton Gordon made the distinction between cultural and structural pluralism. According to Gordon, ethnic groups are not just cultural entities with a distinctive cultural heritage, but also "subsocieties" consisting of a

proliferation of voluntary organization and friendship networks. For Gordon, the ethnic subsociety can exist even after it has lost most of its distinctive cultural attributes. The implications of this formulation is that in Gordon's view the situation in the United States was of a structural pluralism rather than cultural. *"The system of cultural pluralism (which ultimately depends on structural pluralism) has frequently been described as 'cultural democracy,' since it posits the right of ethnic groups in a democratic society to maintain their communal identity and their own subcultural values"* (Gordon 1964: 262-263)

However, he adds the reverse of the coin democratic values prescribe free choice for the individual that can change affiliation to another ethnic group for religious conversion, marriage, or just simple wish. One implication of the differentiation established by Gordon, as pointed out by Safa (1988), is that cultural assimilation do not guarantee structural assimilation as in some black groups.

### Identification

Are the Mexicans and Cubans, as examples of the Latin American immigrants, assimilated, integrated, or adapted, or all three? Portes and Bach (1985) polarize this debate in two theoretical positions. The first one states that the lack of assimilation is a result of the initial ignorance and the lack of preparedness of immigrants to deal with the cultural requirements of the society. The contrary position states

that the more the immigrants are educated and informed, the more they come to learn their real position and are exposed to prejudice and discrimination. Portes and Bach conclude that critical immigrants are more integrated than those who continue to adhere to uniform and often highly idealized views. Being aware of the problems, they say, does not guarantee overcoming them, but represents a first and necessary condition for incorporation--not assimilation--into a new social order. For them, there is no such thing as the "Melting Pot."

Comparing Cubans and Puerto Ricans, Helen Safa (1988) also points out that ethnic consciousness may constitute a resource rather than a force leading to withdrawal or separatism." It may encourage Americans to regard Hispanics equally, not only because of their socioeconomic achievements but out of respect for their rich cultural heritage which they are striving to maintain" (Safa 1988: 17-18). She also states that even liberal thinkers feel that ethnic consciousness "may threaten the civic unity of American society and how acquisition of the English language is taken as a sign of belonging and commitment to the nation" (Safa 1988: 17). The approval of English as the official language in many states of the union, and in 1988 in Florida, is a confirmation of that even though in practice it means virtually nothing.

### Pluralism

In 1982 John Higham, a founder of the "new ethnic history," proclaimed that "the ethnic revival is over, and an era in ethnic studies has come to an end" (Higham 1982: 12). That kind of declaration is symptomatic of the growing fear of cultural and racial conflict posed by the "new" immigration and by militant ethnicity. Criticism of the pluralist history comes from two sources: marxists who argue that the emphasis on ethnic identity is a smoke screen for racism and other reactionary politics and obscures the realities of social class, and the "nationalists. They accuse the pluralists of fomenting disunity and denying the existence of a common American nationality. Such critics agree in dismissing the "ethnic revival," the Alex Haley "roots" phenomena of the '70s, as largely artificial, a media event originated by ethnic ideologists (Vecoli 1985: 15-16).

John Higham (1982) set the theorists of pluralist history in two positions. The soft ones perceive cultural differences as intrinsic assets to be treasured for their own well-being. Their work has the effect of affirming the persistence of distinctive traits and loyalties. The most powerful books in this vein have dealt with the black experience. Immigration historians also have contributed in this stream, many of them centering on the importance of the family as the great stabilizing institution. The second group of scholars, the "hard" pluralists, have been less concerned with the sheer



survival of ethnic differences than with domination and subordination. They are interested in ethnic groups as components of an exploited working class. Their underlying interest is less in problems of identity than in issues of struggle and exploitation. Their sympathies go out to people whose resistance to assimilation can be interpreted as rebellion, and their enthusiasm for ethnic cultures is heavily instrumental. In principle, the two perspectives are incompatible. The first is essentially conservative: culture perpetuates itself untouched by the economic setting into which it is carried. The second perspective is radical: the new economic setting precipitates a creative fusion between the cultures it receives. In this latter perspective, class is the enduring social reality; in the former, it is the ethnic community (Higham 1982: 6-7).

### Incorporation

From a structural perspective, Portes and Bach (1985) state that the differences in the economic success of immigrants to the United States depend mainly on the social structures they find upon arrival and not on individual skills or on the characterization of the immigrants as "economic" or "political. The factor that distinguishes their experiences is that major gains were achieved during the first generation. In other words, what it is crucial is the "mode of incorporation" of the migrants. Here there is a coincidence

with some historians, Zunz says, something similar for settlers in cities, as noted above.

Drawing from his study on Detroit (1982), Zunz states that assimilation in American society was affected by a shift from a dual- to a single-opportunity structure, a shift partly due to the industrialization of the cities, most visible around World War I. A cohesive Anglo-Saxon elite had control of the emerging corporate giants before the 20th century. The changing scale of activities and the different forms of control exercised by this proprietary group greatly affected the relationship between class and ethnicity (Zunz 1985:63-64).

### The Ethnic Myth

In a similar approach, the historian Stephen Steinberg (1981) states that ethnic patterns should not be taken at face value, but must be related to the larger social matrix in which they are embedded. To demystify ethnicity, he argues, requires an exploration of how social forces influence the form and content of ethnicity, and an examination of the specific relationships between ethnic factor on the one hand, and a broad array of historical, economic, political, and social factors on the other.

For Oliver Zunz, the myth is a product of 19th century mentality. In the 20th century, many avenues of mobility previously available within the semi-autonomous ethnic group

were now controlled by owners outside the group. The resulting homogenization of American society is a process that is still little understood despite its consequences for many social and psychological traits in modern American life" (Zunz 1985: 63-65).

Ethnicity is at least as much a cultural as an economic, political, or ideological factor because its public markers are language, specialized behaviors, and even dress, as well as social solidarity. Currently there is confusion between political integration and cultural assimilation. Rather than a "Melting Pot," what it is happening in the United States is a process of political integration. As Zunz affirms, state and society are not equivalent terms.

#### The Mayan Experience

So far, Mayans in Indiantown have shown that they are able to make social adjustments that can lead to what it is referred to here as structural assimilation. It is also very clear that they remain a distinctive cultural group and subsociety. The main reason for keeping their distinctiveness is that it has proven to be a successful survival strategy. And, it is also supported by historical evidence of the survival of Mayans for many centuries under colonial rule (see Appendices A and B).

The first generation of adult Mayans have been reluctant to learn English in many cases, because it is difficult and

not necessary for their activities and the way they are living in ethnic communities. The younger generation, however, is learning English rapidly through the school system, even as the Maya language is being preserved. Except Spanish-speaking *ladinos* (see glossary), most of Guatemalans in Indiantown speak Kanjobal or other Maya languages at home. It is possible that some children and women do not learn Spanish but rather go linguistically from Maya to bilingualism with English.

In general, Mayans have been grateful for the opportunity to work and save money and for being a refugee in the first place, not asking for concessions or civil rights. But as long as they work here and become exposed to unfairness and discrimination, they will start fighting back as they did in the Gazebo Strike and the Posadas of 1988 (see Appendix B). On the other hand, the interest in buying houses and becoming further integrated in economic ways is also indicative of their incorporation into U.S. society.

Indiantown, as a whole, is by no means a "Melting Pot." It could rather be called a "Boiling Pot." But is also true that the heat of social distress was more acute from 1986 to 1989 than in 1993-1994.

#### What Will Happen?

This is the vision of the future--how the different ethnic groups and classes perceive each other. What they are

going to do and what will be the future for the whole town and region as it concerns the Mayan immigrants is an open question. Here is what some people there have to say.

Mary Smith

"In five years . . . children are the hope. They support their children and love them. Guatemalan children receive honors at school. In 10 or 15 years they are going to be the leaders. They are studying with my grandchildren. They are learning to respect each other and the Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and so on.

I see Guatemalans as being more involved in the future than the Mexicans. I remember one time my children did not go to a place because their Mexican friends were not accepted. But Mexicans do not work for the community.

Indiantown could have a very good future. The whole key is education."

Sean O'Brian

He recognizes that Mayans do not fit into the American way of life, but he says it is not a static position; the new generation will be different. But at the same time, he points out that the change can be devastating for the parents because the children are the retirement plan of the Mayans.

"In 5-10 years, Guatemalans will have more skills, and maybe they will be more single family tied, not as extended family tied like now. And in the community the children also

will start new kinds of attachment, and because of that the different groups perhaps will be more bounded."

Zora Neale

"Changes in next five years? It is going to be bigger. This part of the town is going to be more Hispanic (where the Corn Maya office is; see Figure 1-7). Other parts are going to be for people who can afford \$150,000 or \$200,000 for a house. The people who are selling the houses are not going to be in town but in the outlying areas, ranch estates, and other clusters of the community. Probably there will be more and bigger shopping areas.

We need to learn to speak each other's languages, starting in school. We need to be able to relate to each other. We get stronger this way. I get frustrated when I am not able to speak Spanish. This is an English-speaking country. But it is not, because many other languages are spoken."

Bessie White

"Indiantown in five years? Perhaps there will be better communication among people.

It is better now than before. Haitian males marry black women to get green cards, and then they ask for a divorce. Mexicans prefer whites. Blacks girls marry Puerto Rican guys. Most of the whites will move out. Marina will be the same; its too expensive. But there is a black there, a doctor, an

he is a golfer too. This part of town (Corn Maya) would be more Spanish.

Patricia Martínez

In five or more years there will not be a lot of change. There still will be children of the immigrants and immigrants in bad conditions. But the town will be more Hispanic. Many Americans are selling their houses out of frustration. Guatemalans will be the majority and the strongest group. Mexicans only. We will have 60% Hispanic and 40% other groups. Blacks will be the same.

For making a better place to live we should work together. No matter your color or your size, if everybody does not work together, nothing can be done. Blacks, Mexicans, Haitians, Guatemalans, and Americans. But that will be a *Milagro de Dios* (God's miracle). Because in the meetings people do not listen to others. The people who have money are the ones who have to push things, because the people are listening to the ones that 'have the dollar.' It is the people who have power who can help.

My vision is not optimistic, and perhaps I will move out of town. I remember when I was a child and when there were not so many people, everybody knew everybody, but now it is a mess. And that they do not speak English. I understand many things, but it is difficult to just take the situation. And many things go wrong because there are too many people, coming

and coming and asking for things and without wanting to change.

Children are going to make a difference. But there are so many dropouts. Perhaps in 10 years the education that the Guatemalans are receiving will make it more possible to work together. But anyway, the situation is hard for everybody, for all the people here."

Booker Park

Pamela

"In five years, hopefully the laws will be more adapted to the situation of immigrants in Indiantown. And I also expect that Guatemalans will be organized. I told Mario that I want to have an organization of the heads of Latino households. And I want them to organize according to their rules so that they can get together and help each other.

The whites who are going to remain here are the ones living in the Saint Lucie Canal area. But the situation in Big Mound Park and other places will be of immigrants, Guatemalans and Mexicans. Right now there are more Mexicans buying houses than Guatemalans. In Booker Park we are going to have a Latin neighborhood, to improve the place. People is going to remain in Indiantown, or where their children are."

Margarita Avellaneda

"The future should be visualized in the framework of the United States and our countries. Perhaps in five years there will be more employment. Perhaps the situation in Mexico and



Guatemala will improve politically and people will go back. First the ones that are from Third World countries, like Guatemala and Mexico. NAFTA can also attract people back there. Many Mexicans think that when they came here it was like visiting a neighbor. Now, if relations with Cuba become normal, they will import sugar and it will affect the sugar industry here, especially the workers, Jamaicans and Haitians.

The urban development in West Palm Beach will be big. This place is growing very fast. There were haciendas before, when I came. The Military Trail was a country road, and now it is a highway. It has been faster in the last two years. Urban development has taken much rural land for anglos from the North. But they will need workers there."

Maria Alonso (Centro Guatemalteco)

"Indiantown will be a Guatemalan town. We have been nomads, but now this is our town. There are two groups of immigrants. The ones who fled from Guatemala, who now are going to remain here. And the ones to came here for economic reasons and are not going to stay. They are not interested in studying English or adapting to society because they know they have a country that is waiting for them. But many times, they get accustomed here and stay.

Most people, however, are not thinking of going back to Guatemala. They also are changing their minds about the education of the children."

Maria is trilingual. Are her children going to be trilingual? Perhaps, who knows, she says. Through all this text, one important issue has being ethnicity. It is part of the history of the United States and all the world. All of the commentators here have noted the central issue of cultural differences--more than poverty, work, or any other issue. Thus, they are in agreement on this point and all see it as a problem to be resolved in some fashion: by whites moving out, by better language and communication skills, by better leadership, or by children growing up to take over.

#### Identity, Ethnicity, and Class

Historians have long noticed that immigrants have "discovered" their ethnicity in the New World rather than imported it from the Old. For some groups like the Mayans, before coming here they went through a process of resistance and survival, so the process is one of reprocessing their ethnicity and identity as they become more or less integrated in the United States.

Since the last century, in the United States, ethnicity and the word "ethnic" have been used as descriptors of group national origins and social identity, and have been the subject of discussion by scholars. Outside the academy, policy makers, political leaders, and the people, the plain folks, have long felt the pressures of assimilation of an

ethnic group, the fear of newcomers, the discrimination, and the need for action and programs to deal with problems.

Ethnicity is related to other issues in real life as well as in the discussion about it. Migration, assimilation, integration, identification, pluralism, inequality, class and minority behavior, and discrimination are some of the processes involved in the analysis of the culturally based differences which develop as the cutting edge of ethnicity. This is not the place for a review of the vast ethnic experience of the United States or even Florida. But in the closing pages, let me place this study in the general context to understand how the process of Guatemalan Mayan ethnic group formation fits and compares.

There is no doubt that the Mayans in Florida conform to Max Weber's definition of an ethnic group as "a collectivity based on assumption of common origin, real or imaginary" (cited in Jenkins 1981: 5). According with Schermerhorn (1970: 12), an ethnic group is "a collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements.

In contrast to this approach, Marxists and others see ethnicity as the struggle to become part of the national spirit, based on the free market, in terms of Thomas Sowell (Rodríguez 1984). In Marxism there is the combination of grand structural determinism with the free will of the

individual, who transcends false consciousness to choose the future. It also express the relation between structure and dynamics.

The sociologist Jonathan Turner (1986) states that "by 'ethnic' I mean individuals in a society who are identified by others as 'distinctive' in terms of biological, cultural, organizational, and behavioral attributes" (Turner 1986: 406). It should be noticed that in this definition the stress is placed in the recognition of the ethnic element from the outside.

The emphasis in cultural, economic, or ideological traits, as well as the level of the ethnic issue--case, region, nation--varies according to the theoretical and philosophical framework of the analysis. The factors involved in the Indiantown experience provide ample illustrations of virtually all such theoretical discussions. The Guatemalan Mayas as an ethnic group are

1. self-identified, with clear Weberian variables present;
2. clearly marked by persons outside their group as "different";
3. enmeshed in a struggle for economic security in the context of the national capitalist system of the United States market place;
4. having both individual and group needs and values at play in their lives.

5. involved with an ongoing conflict with discriminatory traditions and practices of the local as well as larger regional society.

### The 'Queuing' Theory

Generally, the "Melting Pot" theoretical position is linked with the "queuing" theory. Against the latter, Portes and Bach (1985) state that it is not the case that those groups at the bottom of the American labor market are there because they were latest in the queue. Instead, the history of such minorities as blacks and Mexican-Americans has been marked by reversals of past economic and social achievements and semi-permanent confinement to the bottom positions of the occupational hierarchy, while other more recent arrivals have climbed ahead. The factor that distinguishes these experiences is that major gains were achieved during the first generation. What it is astonishing, Portes and Bach say, is that statements about ethnic succession and gradual progress continue to be promulgated, even by persons from the most disadvantaged minorities, because of their ideological usefulness as instruments of legitimation. This is the case of positions like the one of Thomas Sowell, mentioned above.

### Race Matters

Referring to the above author and the publication of his book Race and Economics in 1975, and the appearance of an

aggressive black intellectual conservative assault on traditional black liberal ideas, Cornell West in Race Matters (1993), it has been stated that black conservatism is a response to the crisis of liberalism in Afro-America. More recently, this crisis, exemplified in part by the rise of Reaganism and the collapse of leftist politics, has created an intellectual space that conservative and, many times, reactionary voices of various colors now occupy (West 1993: 52). Summarizing the way in which this conservative body is conducting politics, he says that since 1968 it has "appealed to popular xenophobic images--playing the black, female, and homophobic cards to realign the electorate along race, gender, and sexual orientation lines" (West 1993: 6).

As a way to overcome the conservative tide, based mainly in a behaviorist interpretation of history as well as the structural liberalism, West proposes the politics of conversion, proceeding in the local level to promote self-worth and self-affirmation, without ignoring the structural conditions that shape the sufferings and lives of people. This is the only way to overthrow the most basic issue currently facing black America: the nihilist threat to its very existence, he says. Politics of conversion is rooted in culture. Furthermore, Professor West states that we should reject the idea that structures are primarily economic and political creatures. "Culture is as much a structure as the economy or politics; it is rooted in institutions such as

families, schools, churches, synagogues, mosques, and communication industries (e.g., television, radio, video, music). Similarly, the economy and politics are not only influenced by values but also promote particular cultural ideals of the good life and good society" (West 1993: 12).

Professor West's thinking allows us to perceive that both self-isolation and discrimination are based in segmentation of reality and in disconnection of historical processes. The closeness in their own set of realities and values prevents groups from growing up and becoming integrated in an increasing complex society or letting them judge the others on their own terms and prejudices. In absence of comprehension of the process of constructing structures and behavior, and of tolerance for the results of that process, power is used to identify, target, and manipulate minorities. And, it is used in terms of gender, sex inclinations, race, age, or ethnicity, as West says.

### Ethnicity as State Policy

In his analysis of Ethnicity as an academic subcultural theory, the Marxist David Muga (1984) presents other theoretical positions that coincide with his own. One of them is **Ethnicity as State Policy**. In Muga's terms, the ethnic group is a social category as much as a matter of state/government policy as much as a matter of cultural style. State policies toward national ethnic minorities change in the

face of struggle to the wakening of resistance put up by the ethnic groups themselves. Different elements together--state, private interests, and reactionary social forces--in concert as well as separately, work to stigmatize in very particular ways what it is to experience ethnicity.

The roll of the state in the predatory relationships between the private interests and ethnic groups is crucial. State active intervention in the policies of ethnicity have largely coincided with either long-term shifts in the labor process or the needs of national territorial/resource expansion and are related to a form of class struggle in the dominant society, Muga concludes. He also states that being pushed into certain economic roles may make a group particularly vulnerable to competition from rising groups precisely because they lack solidarity bonds to the political dominant group. This seems to be the case of the blacks in some places in the United States.

In general, state agencies and the state's governing apparatus, most often in conjunction with private economic interests, determine what it means to be an ethnic member. According with Muga, academic subcultural theories forget the role of the state in determining ethnicity, and the whole problem of ethnic **resistance** is flipped over and transformed into the question of ethnic **persistence**, that is, formulated in the queuing theory as it is presented in the section above. The questions of ethnic powerlessness and ethnic revolutionary



struggles are passed off in favor of investigations into the sources of cultural identification (Muga 1984: 14-17).

Cultural pluralism in the United States is essentially documented by demography, but its social acceptance was contingent on the political movements of ethnic groups, resulting in concessions from the sources of national power. Jenkins states that ethnicity in service delivery received more support from the "maximum feasible participation of the poor" in community programs than from any ideological concern with "role" or "identity" (Jenkins 1981: 196).

### Structural and Individual Forces

Jonathan Turner declares that ethnic antagonism does not persist only by virtue of structural forces. Rather, he states, there is a social psychological element which, at the macro level, can be conceptualized as a series of cultural processes revolving around values and beliefs, which for him are simply terms to denote for macro purposes the sum of certain types of cognition held by individual members of a population (Turner 1986: 419).

Portes and Bach claim that the main difference between the two main Latin groups is that the Mexican migration, dispersed throughout the country, represents a wage-labor flow, creating ethnic communities with the character of poor inner-city neighborhoods.

On the other hand, employment in Cuban enclave firms in Miami is the significant factor among Cuban refugees. So, the explanation for why Cubans are relatively more successful economically than Mexicans is **structural**--the Cuban enclave.

For Patterson, it is also the struggle for individuality against the centripetal pull of the group that is the truly creative dimension of culture. This the same Thomas Sowell argument (Cited in Zunz 1985: 63).

An anecdote can better illustrate what is the meaning of ethnicity in regard to problems related in this case to the use of public services: In a field study conducted in 1954 on reciprocal empathy between blacks and Puerto Ricans, a black woman in a New York City housing project was asked what problems she had in common with her Puerto Rican neighbors. Her answer was, "None." The interviewer persisted: "How about jobs, housing, discrimination?" "Yes, we have the same problems," was the answer, "but you asked what we had in common. To have a problem in common, you have to feel it together. And we don't feel our problems together" (Jenkins 1981: 10).

### The Mayan Experience

Frequently, ethnic and racial differences are subsumed in a minority status. When a person is classified as "Hispanic," this is not only a racial or ethnic label, but a minority classification, and it constitutes a political issue. Mayans

are stereotyped as Hispanics. But they do not consider themselves as Hispanics. They are Mayans. But if they are considered as Mayans, they are native American Indians. When this label "Indians" is applied to them, they become the target of deeper discrimination not only by whites but also by Chicanos and Mexicans, as an extension of the traditional discrimination by *ladinos* and other ethnic and class groups in Guatemala and Mexico, as well as by the strong traditional anti-Indian policies in the United States.

I agree with Zunz when he states that ethnicity is better understood in a frame of generations. The enclaves and political nationalities seem to be reprocessed with the passage of the time. A complementary analysis of structures and individual characteristics seems to be more promising for the ethnic issue. However, the structural issue is the basic one: self-employment and the economic returns on human capital that the enclave made possible. These, for example, have little to do with the ability and motivation of individual refugees, but depend instead upon the social structures that received them, as stated in Chapter Two. All of the Guatemalan immigrants coming without visas to the United States enter at the bottom of the society in Indiantown and West Palm Beach in economic and social terms, through a network, not an entrenched enclave. Once in the place, their legal status is ambiguous and their jobs are unstable.

Zunz and Portes and Bach coincide in saying that the first generation is crucial for the incorporation of immigrants. This is also the hypothesis of Chiswick (1982); groups of immigrants that do not "make it" in the first five years at the level they came from in their country, will "make it" at a lower level. So far, Mayans in South Florida have chosen different ways of "making it." There are the ones who come and go from Guatemala to Florida, in a Mexican style, and are improving the situation of their families and communities in Guatemala. Another segment is pretty much in the "behaviorist" path of thinking, that it is your hard work, your behavior in an "American Way," that allows you to climb the social ladder. And, they are trying very hard to assimilate to American culture and improve their education and job skills, starting with learning English. There also are the ones who while remaining in the U.S. try to keep speaking Maya and preserving their traditions. But in all cases, they are building efficacious networks that cover places of work from Florida (see Figure 1-6) to California. The networks that include professionals in West Palm Beach and Miami imply class differences but hold with nationalistic goals or Guatemalans helping each other as such. The traditional exploitation of Mayans by *ladinos* has somehow reversed when they both work in agriculture, because some Mayans who arrived first have advanced as crew leaders and *raiteros* (drivers, see

glossary); they possess the "know how" of that labor. Here, the "queuing" theory appears to function.

The kind of ideology implicit on the blame on ethnic groups for coming to the United States, stealing jobs from Americans, and causing crime is the same that considers the poor as being responsible for their situation, as analyzed by Leonard Beeghley in Living Poorly in America (1983). The implication is that there is no structural problem, but just that people are unadapted or inferior. The bitterness that remains in the interviews of whites and blacks in Indiantown and social workers in West Palm Beach is based on the duality that views the behavior of some Mayans as inadequate while at the same time recognizing that those "inferior" people are "making it" anyway. One can say that Mayans, especially the ones who come as refugees, are victims, but they do not behave as victims.

Mario (see Chapters One and Four) said recently that it takes seven years to adapt to the American way of life. Recognizing Chiswik's assertion, but being able to recognize and "read" the system, he is sure the next generation is going to do a lot better.

Is the class factor more relevant than the ethnic one? Is ethnic inequality embedded in the class one? There is no simple answer to these questions. Ethnic groups have characteristically included more than one class, and classes have been fractured by their diverse ethnic components.

Although ethnic entrepreneurs in the enclaves benefit from the use of an ethnic labor force, they provide a way of mobility and opportunity not available outside of it. This is the case of the Cubans and Vietnamese. However, there is a coincidence of certain lower classes with certain racial minorities and ethnic groups. As stated by Portes and Bach, the "queuing theory" generally is not applicable when racial differences are involved (see also Steinberg 1981).

In Latin America there is also an "ignominious history" in the formation and survival of ethnic identities. The case of the Mayans in Guatemala and Mexico (presented in Appendix A) is a good example of the people's record to preserve their communities and their cultures, and of resistance, as Mario also said, referring to the situation in Indiantown. "Whites are tired of us and are giving up by selling their houses, but we continue to develop our pattern of resistance." This is a profile that is deeply embedded in the Popol Vuh and in the Mayan tradition of rebirth.

We can make some generalizations about the impact of the conquest and colonization of America and Africa by the Western Europeans. However, the differences in the process of identity creation as are different as the historical processes are, for example, between North, Central, and South America. To point to them is far away from the scope of this dissertation. However, regional differences can be seen in the case of the associations that former peasants produce in

the big cities of Latin America and Africa. They have been described and analyzed by anthropologists (Doughty 1970, Safa 1982).

None of these associations by locality or region of origin exist in Bogotá (my city). However, there is a certain logic to this absence. In Colombia there are no strong ethnic or tribal links of urban migrants with their place of origin because there was no ethnic dualism. For this reason there was no cause for the creation of these organizations in Bogotá. Nevertheless, the necessity to adapt and transform a medium that is perceived as relatively unfriendly and hostile leads to the creation of networks to assist in survival. The answer lies in an individual level survival strategy, perhaps circumscribed by the family, but it does not reach the level of the ethnic association. In this case the cultural differences, as pointed out by Pineda (1982), are more cultural class differences.

In Indiantown and in West Palm Beach as well, Mayans are segmented by town or state of origin: the *Jacalteca* house, mentioned in Chapter Four, and the people of Totonicapan living in the trailers, are examples of this tendency. But Mayans also are able to mix with people of other towns and regions. One can even find Mayan people living with Mexicans. Another manifestation of the tendency of grouping by town is manifested in the organization of soccer championships where the teams are set by town or region. Currently, the soccer

games and the holiday celebrations constitute the main interaction of the Mayans as a community. Other important events, although intermittent, are the collection of money for funerals and to send dead people to Guatemala, and the health days that ethnic groups organize once in a while.

There are similarities between the University and Indiantown. Both are places where if you come back after some years you do not know most of the people. They are like rivers that are always the same but with different water, although some people, professors and leaders, remain longer.





FIGURE 6-1  
THE FIRST OF THE MAYAN ETHNIC ORGANIZATIONS



FIGURE 6-2  
THE OBSERVED OBSERVING THE ETHNOGRAPHER



FIGURE 6-3  
THE "OLD, MODERN" GENERATION



FIGURE 6-4  
THE NEW TRADITIONAL GENERATION



FIGURE 6-5  
THE ANTHROPOLOGIST'S SHADOW



FIGURE 6-6  
THE ANTHROPOLOGIST, A FAMILIAR FACE IN TOWN

## CHAPTER 7 IN PURGATORY

Mayans in the United States follow a complex path that is presented here as a Purgatory. The experience is not new. Many Europeans at the end of last century and the beginning of this century had to overcome their own ordeals. What is new is that new waves of immigrants have to go through an increasingly complicated process as the international situation is in itself more complex and the capitalist system makes capital and labor more mobile. The new alliances in this world economy rearrange regional markets, erasing old and establishing new boundaries. The political focus also has shifted from one of competing superpowers to one of domestic and commercial wars and alliances.

The particular purgatory of Mayans, who in the United States constitute a very small contingent of immigrants but are representative of the largest native group living in North and Central America (Burns 1993: 1), is the most outstanding example of many of the contradictions, ambiguities, and paradoxes that today are part of the immigration system and United States policy toward Latin America. Being labeled and targeted as "Indians,"

"Hispanic," "farm workers," and "aliens," Mayans are surviving this Purgatory with dignity, cultural strategies, and the willingness to take risks that many other immigrants have taken before. Their response is unique in many ways as shown here: it is the particularity, the uniqueness of being "always Maya" (Burns 1993: 174-192) that stands out. As difficult as it is, their stance in the United States is only one part of the ordeal. The hell of the genocidal attacks on their persons, villages, and towns; the destruction of their milpas and communities by dictatorial regimes and armies in Guatemala; and the refugee camps in Mexico have led to this. Hopefully, the Heaven will come through the reconstruction and reorganization of their lives in their Guatemalan homeland, as well as for those who will remain in the United States and continue to live in "two worlds."

The contradictory nature of the discourse against illegal immigrants and the need for a cheap labor force is reflected in the laws and policies of the government of the United States. History shows the shifts of the policies in the last decades from the 1962 Migration Refugee Assistance Act, that allowed Cubans to come as refugees under the Refugees Act of 1980, which contrary to its name, classified Cubans as "Marielitos" and Haitians as "entrants" under the IRCA law of 1986, permitting SAS workers to get green cards or benefit in later developments like the ABC program (see

Chapter Two). These changes show the ambiguities used to avoid granting the same rights to people of certain ethnic, race, or class characteristics that are given to others with the similar qualifications. Being semi-legal, or in an undefined status, Mayans are a clear example of this inconsistency in the United States migratory policy toward Latin America. In this regard, Mayans, like other "unpopular" immigrants, are another example of the policy selectivity toward immigrants based on inconsistently applied political, racial, and ethnic filters.

Up until now, a very few (0.3 percent in 1993) of the applications of Guatemalans for asylum have been granted, even though Mayans come from a country where genocide and flagrant violations of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights have been thoroughly documented (see Appendix A, also Montejo and Akab 1992). The efforts of the immigrants and their advocates in the struggle to stay in the United States also are reflections of the semi-legality of their status.

In United States, farm work is currently based and dependent upon the importation of labor from the Third World, especially Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central America. Mayans have come in search of a safe refuge, a place to work and live. Thus, they enter the labor market at the bottom as migratory farm laborers. But they are self-selected in terms of survivor skills. The ones that

came have already learned these skills through previous work migration to Guatemala's Pacific coast and to several places in Mexico. In this trait, Mayan workers can be compared with migrant blue collar workers in Bogotá in the 1980s that had an average of four jobs before becoming industrial workers (Arturo 1987).

In the United States, Mayans follow a path composed of several steps. At the beginning, they apply a complex strategy in order to survive: 1) spatial mobility--moving within the state and also in the country, going north when the work season finishes in Florida; 2) work diversification--being willing and able to perform different jobs they did not know before, or also by shifting jobs as they did in Guatemala; 3) using various living arrangements to save money--Mayans are willing to concede many comforts and to take risks in order to save money as they settle down to live in South Florida; and 4) starting to participate in the process of social mobility in both the United States and Guatemala.

Contrary to what it is said in the media and by politicians, immigrants are not a burden. They pay their taxes. As Aguirre's study shows, only one out of five SAS workers are recipients of social services, and as my data indicate, about the same percentage applies to Mayan workers. The costs of being a farm worker is subsidized by the people themselves and not by the state or employers.

According to the following indicators, Mayans 1) can work only eight months each year; 2) have an average unemployment period upon arrival of at least one month; 3) can find work only 3.3 days a week on average; 4) sometimes have to pay out one up one-third of their wages to intermediaries (crew-leaders and labor centers) in order to remain in the labor pool; and 5) have to save money for the times they are not working. Thus, they are subsidizing the state and the business enterprises in keeping themselves available as workers. Mayans have to do that because they are "semi-legal." They are legal enough to work but not legal enough to receive the social and economic fringe benefits that would be available if they held green cards. However, after a few years Mayans have a strong tendency to leave farm work as a primary occupation.

Mayans are considered quiet, good workers and consider themselves to be hard and reliable workers as well. This is the reason why bosses and crew leaders hold them in such high esteem. Although, most of them have not participated in strikes or political protests, they will stand up for their rights, as the "Posadas of 1988" and "Gazebo Strike" confirm. They place a high moral and ethical value on work as part of their idea of what a decent people are. Behind that value there is also a strategy, a collective planning that gives them the power to survive and succeed.



In synthesis, the new waves of workers from the Caribbean and Central America do not compete with local American workers because the labor market is sectorized by ethnicity; neither are they being a burden for the social security and welfare system at this point. However, they do compete indirectly for federal, state, and local funds for housing, education, health, and other basic needs along with other minority groups. As a consequence of the IRCA 1986 law, some workers are leaving agricultural work and may be future competition for white and black workers. It is also predictable that Mexicans, who have a long tradition of seasonal migration crossing U.S. border and being well-recognized agricultural workers (especially good orange pickers) will remain farm workers in higher proportion than Mayans and other ethnic Latin and Caribbean groups.

Guatemalan immigrants here are changing their villages and towns where they acquire houses and made other investments, gaining economic and social influence. Moreover, if they stay in the United States they give their land and improvements in the home village to family members there.

They have also spread over Martin and Palm Beach Counties and Immokalee areas in search of work. Palm Beach Gardens, Lake Worth, Lantana, Immokalee, and other places are now the nodes of the network they have built. It seems clear that Mayans in Indiantown and West Palm Beach are

making a success of their lives in Florida. They are making it through the hard work they do. They are able to buy houses because they have proven they are economically responsible, not because there is still any better understanding in living together with other ethnic groups. The relationships among ethnic, racial, and class groups generally is based on traditional stereotypes and prejudices. Whites have been pushed to their limits of tolerance in this respect, but Mayans continue developing the pattern of "resistance" by which they have survived for centuries.

The most conspicuous force in this process I have called the Maya Phoenix: the emotional, cultural, and economic process involved as people strive to regain everything that they have lost in holocaust. The path of reconstruction is plagued with many obstacles. Some of them are internal antagonisms and lack of experience in the United States' system. The fluorescence of ethnic organizations for the Mayans in Indiantown and West Palm Beach and rivalry between them is an indication of the phenomena. But the Maya Phoenix has continued to grow. The main differences between the Mayans in Indiantown and West Palm Beach are that in Indiantown the people are from the rural areas and in West Palm Beach the people are more urban and have more years of schooling. It also appears those in Indiantown are more "community-oriented" people, while in

West Palm Beach people seem more interested in individual self-improvement and in being close to their jobs, as shown by many young single men who want to live without any imposition of traditional duties and seek to enjoy their freedom and acquisitions that the media make so desirable. The increasing number of *ladinos* (see glossary) who are moving to that area add to this trend.

Mayans do not yet have political representation. They come from a situation of no democracy and oppression that makes them feel they are doing better here. On the other hand, they are unaware of many rights they have here. Many still think that, in part, their strength is to keep isolated so that nobody will bother them. Being "semi-legal," without knowing the system, how it works, or the language, they feel that a low profile is the best way to improve their situation in the long run. Perhaps they are right, as they seem to be able to finesse the hostile and ambiguous policies by so doing. In Indiantown, the political system is unreachable because the town is unincorporated. In West Palm Beach, the Cubans and Puerto Ricans constitute a *coup de force* difficult to overcome.

There are at least three main nets of authority and organization among the Mayans in Indiantown and West Palm Beach. One group is connected with the Catholic Church. The other is more Mayan and secular, and the third and newest one is composed mainly of *ladinos* (see glossary). In

regard to social mobility, some have partially adopted the ideas of the whites in respect to the education and "civilization" of immigrants. Others are increasingly conscious of the need to know the system and how to take advantage of it. They recognize the need to overcome a patronizing system that rules their lives. But they do not consider the "American Way of Life" as superior or deny the use of the Mayan language or the traditional costumes. The third group is related to the religious and nonprofit organizations that have flourished in the last years, with diversity of ideologies and goals.

Mayans are increasingly conscious of their rights as the use of work benefits shows. They also are more conscious of discrimination against them. In this regard, they show, as Portes and Bach (1985) say, that by being more aware and critical as an ethnic group, they can integrate better to the main society. The Mayan community is diversifying, and that makes easier to integrate, but it also is leading to new class differences. Does this mean the Mayans or Guatemalans in general are going to develop an enclave or special kind of social organization? The past and present of Mayans in the region makes me think that future developments will be more in the form of complex networks than as an ethnic enclave.

Finally, it seems that there is no single theory that can comprehend the process of integration and incorporation

of immigrants in the United States, or the ordeal and integration of Mayans. The political economy approach is useful in understanding the international and structural issues, while for understanding the integration of immigrants, approaches that take into consideration both structural and behavioral, individual, and societal approaches work better.

Mayans do not fit neatly into the categories that authorities and policy studies classify immigrants. The first ones were refugees but without that status, forcing them to work like labor immigrants. Now there are both refugees and economic exiles and true labor immigrants. In order to be able to understand this process and condition, we need dynamic approaches rather than static classifications.

Theoretical paradigms as stated by Khun (1962) have "life." They are born, they develop, and they die. Theories that are in the middle level of abstraction and mainly in a dualistic approach are soon replaced. And as they do not completely answer the questions, other theories are born not only to answer the original questions but because there are new ones. A comparative model, as applied by Bergquist (1986) for the political and economic analysis of Latin America, seems to be promising.

Whatever the theory of academics and policy workers, Mayans are overcoming a hard ordeal. As one of the white

leaders observed, "What most impresses me is that being in the most difficult situation, they are always smiling." He is right for, overall, the Mayans are a positive and wonderful people. And, speaking as an alien in a foreign land, I understand how it is to pass through Purgatory.



FIGURE 7-1  
ALWAYS MAYA



FIGURE 7-2  
NEW FLAGS AND FRIENDS

## GLOSSARY

- Alcalde:* A local government representative in many countries in Latin America. In Guatemala it could be both a civil or religious local authority.
- Bolillo:* Term that Guatemalans and Mexicans use to refer to White Americans. It has been used for many years and means white bread.
- Coyote:* Person who helps others to cross the Mexican or American borders or travel through Mexico or/and the United States, illegally, for money. For the immigrants in this case, coyotes are Guatemalans, Mexicans, or Americans.
- Don:* Word used in Spain and Latin America to address a man with respect.
- Doña:* Word used in Spain and Latin America to address a woman with respect.
- Guales:* Pejorative term used by some whites to refer to Guatemalans in Indiantown and West Palm Beach. It is not widely used.
- Labor:* Agricultural work, mainly picking up citrus and vegetables in United States.



- Ladino:* A mestizo, a person who has Indian and Spaniard ancestors in Latin America. In Guatemala and Mexico, *ladinos* belong to a different social class than Indians.
- Migra:* Popular name among immigrants for the Patrol Border and the Immigration and Naturalization Service officers.
- Milpa:* Small piece of land that constitutes the basic food provision for family peasants in Central America and Mexico.
- Mojado:* See wetbacks.
- Moyo:* Pejorative term used by Guatemalans to refer to Black American and Haitians.
- Patrulla Civil:*  
Civil Patrol. Armed civil patrols organized by the army in Guatemala in order to control the peasant population. All men must take turns to patrol their villages and towns.
- Raitero:* Driver, worker who has a car or truck to provide transportation to the work place for other workers, charging for the service daily or weekly.
- Rebusque:* Also known as *juglarismo*, is the strategy of many poor people in the Third World that consists of spatial mobility, work diversification, and living day by day, in order to survive.

*Señor Mayor:*

Title of respect used to address senior traditional leaders in Guatemala. Usually one of them is the outspoken person of the community.

*Sicario:* Member of gangs in Colombia who was hired to kill somebody, especially in the war between drug cartels or between them and the government.

*Tamales:* Dish made from corn. Each country or region in Latin America has its own version.

*Wetbacks:* It refers generally to all people who cross into the United States illegally, but specifically to the ones who cross the Rio Grande River, that is the border with Mexico, and get wet. In Spanish *mojados*.

APPENDIX A  
HELL: THE ORDEAL IN GUATEMALA AND MEXICO

The Maya Phoenix

*En seguida fueron aniquilados, destruidos y deshechos los muñecos de palo, y recibieron la muerte.*

*Una inundación fue producida por el Corazón del Cielo; un gran diluvio se formó, que cayó sobre las cabezas de los muñecos de palo.*

*De tzité se hizo la carne del hombre, pero cuando la mujer fue labrada por el Creador y el Formador, se hizo de espadaña la carne de la mujer. Estos materiales quisieron el Creador y el Formador que entraran en su composición.*

*Pero no pensaban, no hablaban con su Creador y su Formador, que los habían hecho. Y por esta razón fueron muertos, fueron anegados. Una resina abundante vino del cielo. El llamado Xecotcovach llegó y les vació los ojos; Camalotz vino a cortarles la cabeza; y vino Cotzbalam y les devoró las carnes. El Tucumbalam llegó también y les quebró y magulló los huesos y los nervios, les molió y desmoronó los huesos.*

*Y esto fue para castigarlos porque no habían pensado en su madre, ni en su padre, el Corazón del Cielo, llamado Huracán. Y por este motivo se oscureció la faz de la tierra y comenzó una lluvia negra, una lluvia de día, una lluvia de noche. (Popol Vuh, chap. III: 30-31)*

According with the Popol Vuh, the Mayans were created and destroyed several times; the quotation above refers to one of these creations. The history that followed after the Spanish conquest of what is today Guatemala has shown that Mayans, as

other aboriginal peoples, have an enormous capacity of resistance and survival, of what Amilcar Cabral (1973) called the "culture of resistance" against colonialism. Lovell (1985) estimates that the population of the Chuchumatán region was between 150,000-250,000, a density that was recovered only at the middle of this century. These estimates are in agreement with have been studied by Borah in Central America, and Germán Colmenares and others in Colombia, and South America. A similar disaster can be found in the curve of population of the Indians of the U.S. between 1810 and 1950 (Steinberg 1981).

In Guatemala, as in the rest of Latin America, massive destruction of the population was the way to begin five centuries of domination, up the present. Three discernible cycles can be traced, according with Lovell (1986): Conquest by Imperial Spain; conquest by local and international capitalism; and conquest by state terror. In all that extended time the people of Guatemala have demonstrated a capacity for survival. Each of the cycles has produced or reinforced certain geographical patterns that reflect basic and unresolvable fissures in the nature of Guatemalan social, economic, and political life. The geography of conquest is one in which the cornerstones of the Maya culture, three elements essential to group survival, recur and figure prominently: land, community, and attachment to place. The defense of these cornerstones has been fundamental to the

maintenance of Maya identity. So, understood properly, for Mayans, conquest is not a remote, historical experience but a visible, present condition.

The Civil Patrols implemented by the government in the '80s, that I will comment on later, are really a way to try to take advantage of the strong social organization of the Mayans. La Farge (1931) states that at the beginning of this century the Indians were divided into two classes, militians and those subject only to the demands for labor. Militians were few, the rest served as *mayores*, a kind of general servant attached to the Town Hall, who must be present there daily and who is called upon to carry the baggage of travellers and to do all the various odd jobs around town. They were also liable to being called for all kinds of community and special services (La Farge 1931: 82). In towns the real power was held by the Secretary, usually a ladino. La Farge comments that the system of *municipalidades* with shared responsibility trains them in citizenship and responsibility in a manner much superior to the North American pauperizing reservations and agencies (La Farge 1931: 83).

Wagley (1941) also emphasizes the trait of strong social organization with the early start in schools (7-11 years olds) and then the hierarchy of municipal authorities. There is a strong community and extended family, but not nationality, in the sense of the Guatemalan nation. That is why one can perceive clearly a repression from the state to the Mayan

communities, with nothing in between. An anthropological way to see this is the famous Redfield and Singer (1954) conceptualization of little tradition and big tradition.

Although violence is not new by any means in Guatemala, as recent as the '60s there were a wave of guerrilla activity and general repression by the government; what we are concerned for here is the most recent wave of violence that expels many Mayans to other parts of the country, and to México and the United States, including Indiantown. Drawing from the research of several Guatemalan and foreign anthropologists (Carol Smith, Shelton Davis, Ricardo Falla, Arturo Arias, Michael Richards, Chris Krueger and Kjell Enge, Philip Wearne, Norman Schwartz, Richard Adams, and himself), Carmack (1986) presents an impressive summary of the recent waves of violence, especially the 1980s, in Guatemala:

1. A variety of social forces in the '50s, '60s, and '70s radically changed the Indians, and this intermittent guerilla war increased its intensity after the major 1976 earthquake.
2. These social forces politicized the Indians enough to cause them to rebel when anti-guerrilla repression by this army in the late '70s was applied against them.
3. In the face of a feared Indian rebellion, the ladino rulers and the army launched a genocidal campaign, destroying villages and killing thousands of persons.

4. Indians turned to the guerrillas by the thousands, trying to survive, but the guerrillas could not protect the Indians, nor could they adequately arm them.
5. Military rule brought counterinsurgency strategies to Indian areas including "Civil Patrols," Model Villages, and Development Poles, which devastated the native communities, institutions, and cultures (Carmack 1986: 10-11).

Survival is not a chosen alternative by the Mayans and Guatemalans in general. Eduardo Galeano had written in 1966:

In Guatemala things are more easily seen and felt than elsewhere. This is a regime that violently imposes the law of survival of the strongest; this is a society that condemns most people to live as if in a concentration camp; this is an occupied country where the imperium shows and uses its claws and teeth. Dreams fade inevitably into nightmares and one can no longer love without hating, fight for life without killing, say Yes without also implying No. (Galeano 1969: 115, quoted in Simon 1987: 16)

The destruction in numbers is presented by Chapin (1987):

1. According to military sources, more than 400 rural villages were destroyed during counterinsurgency campaigns between 1981 and 1985.
2. According to a study by the Juvenile Division of the Supreme Court, "in Guatemalan highlands, some 200,000 children had lost one parent since 1980, while at least 25% had lost both" (Americas Watch 1986: 6); more conservative estimates place the

number of children losing one parent at slightly more than 100,000.

3. Between 50,000 and 75,000 people were either killed or disappeared between 1978 and 1985 (Krueger & Enge 1985; Americas Watch 1986: 6).
4. As many as 1,000,000 people were displaced from their communities, and perhaps 200,000 became refugees abroad.

One of the most vivid horror tales of this violence in Guatemala is narrated by the Guatemalan anthropologist Ricardo Falla (1983) in **Voices of the Survivors, The Massacre at Finca San Francisco, Guatemala**. It is difficult to find something that can be compared with the cold-blooded killing of infants by smashing their heads against walls to save bullets. Reading it, I remembered the murder of the Cuivas, an aboriginal group that lived in Planas, Colombia, in 1968.

Racism has played a strong role in this genocide. Anthropologists have documented the long history of racial and ethnic discrimination of Indians by Ladinos. Also, there are some religious elements. Gaskin says that "with American assistance, the million Ladinos of western civilization in the cities are waging war on the six million Indians who live in the countryside" (Gaskin: 33). But it is not only the war against aboriginal religion. It is also the competition between Catholics and the Protestant fundamentalists,



especially that innovative, liberation theology movements in the Catholic church took the Indian side.

As Carmack (1986) says, anthropologists, drawing upon Eric Wolf's ideas, have insisted on the crucial role of the Indians in the Guatemalan crisis, as peasants. They have interpreted the conflict as a peasant war. Carmarck insists that this is not a religious war between extreme radicals with the Indians in between. This is the kind of interpretation sustained by the U.S. government, and a good part of the literature about the genocide. No, the fact is that most of the violence has been directed against the peasant Indians; nor were they passive neutrals, but active supporters of the guerrilla forces. Another important issues pointed by Smith (cited in Carmack 1986: 14) is whether or not the peasant Indians have resisted the proletarian forces of capitalism through local commercial developments and nativistic cultural reconstruction. Carmack states that the more proletarianized peasants have been the peasant sector most susceptible to the revolution. The government intent to make Guatemala one nation "in place of 23 carries the threat of extinction for the rich cultures of the indian groups" (National Council of Churches data). Referring to the ideology implicit in the violence in Central America, Gaskin states that deeper than the problems between the Ladinos and the Indians in Guatemala is the fact that the United States is now an outpost of Europe in the New World. The attitudes that are killing the Indians

in Central and South America are the same that killed the Indians in North America in the last century. They are the continuing colonization of the western hemisphere by the European-based cultures (Gaskin: 34-35).

According to Schwartz (1983), the Salvadoran Indians ceased identifying themselves as Indians after 1932 massacre, but because Guatemala's guerrilla warfare of the 60s was primarily Ladino and that of the 80s has been Indian, little ethnic reidentification has taken place.

### Refugees

As Simon (1987) presents it, since the early 1980s the Guatemalan government has developed one of the most ruthless counterinsurgency programs in Latin America, perhaps in the world. The program is remarkably similar to the civic-action blueprint developed by the United States in Vietnam in the late 60s (Simon 1987: 14), accomplished by forcibly incorporating one million peasants into a civil patrol system--unarmed, unremunerated patrol duty being required of all rural males. For further control, some 70,000 Mayans are corralled as internal refugees into "model villages" (permanent containment areas under military control), thus the Guatemalan military has sought to ensure its domination over every facet of Mayan daily life. She concludes that present-day counterinsurgency has probably done as much to alter

Indian life as the Spanish Conquest and its aftermath did in four centuries (Simon 1987: 14-15).

Traditional leaders concerned with ritual and religion were viewed as harmless, but leaders working with cooperatives, labor movements, and other community action groups invariably were killed or forced to flee. Those who have returned are not anxious to resume leadership positions openly in the community (Chapin 1987: 16). Promoters working with the army are trying to improve the image of the army through "education," handing out pamphlets that proclaim "The Army is Your Friend," and assisting with such community improvement projects as construction of schools and bridges. Chapin states that "by the mid-80s, development activities in highland Guatemala were largely restricted to military-controlled government programs which were concentrated in "areas of conflict" (Chapin 1987: 12).

Part of the strategy of the army is the **development poles**. They were, according to a military publication, designed for

those who, during months and even years, wandered starving, pursued, harassed by fear, hunger, and illness, have found today, in their own territories--where they have voluntarily decided to return-- a secure and comfortable place that is their own, so that in tranquility they can dedicate themselves to rebuilding their future. (Ejército de Guatemala 1984: vii, quoted in Chapin 1987: 21)

In numbers, Chapin states that by the mid-80s a large percentage of the population displaced by the Violence in

Southern Quiché had returned to their villages. This is not the case for the 150,000 to 250,000 who left Guatemala and sought refuge in México and, to a smaller extent, in the United States. By the end of 1987, fewer than 3,000 refugees had returned officially; there is good reason to believe that the majority will remain outside of the country for the foreseeable future (Chapin 1987: 27), although the Chiapas revolt in Mexico has caused many to return from the refugee camps there.

Those refugees who fled their homeland but currently are in Guatemala are of two positions. The first, voiced primarily by army officials and Ladinos, holds that the act of fleeing is an admission of guilt. The second, expressed by refugees' fellow-villagers, maintains the refugees fled unspeakable terror (Manz 1988: 59).

For Huehuetenango, where most of the Indiantown Guatemalan residents come from, Manz concludes that the years of intense violence has caused a shift, depriving people of former mechanisms of self-government and problem solving, limiting traditional means of generating income. These changes make it difficult to successfully reintegrate refugees into their communities of origin in this area. Additional evidence suggests that the safety of returning refugees could be compromised if they return to this region (Mans 1988: 66). The case of an Indiantown school aide, who went in the summer

of 1993 to Huehuetenango and was kidnapped by the Army, confirms this suspicion.

Many of the refugees who fled to México have remained in refugee camps, very close to the border between Guatemala and México. Even after repeatedly being attacked by the Guatemalan army, they have refused to be relocated. They still did not want to go far away from their homeland. But finally, on April 30, the Mexican government decided to relocate the camps. They were sent to Campeche and Quintana Roo, although not all of them submitted to the relocation. Some went by themselves to other places in Mexico, some back to Guatemala, and a small number went to the United States. A comparison between the camps in Chiapas and the relocation Camps in Campeche and Quintana Roo is made by Manz, in which although the living conditions are perhaps better than in Chiapas, being in a place where they cannot move without permission, and are so isolated from relatives in Chiapas and Guatemala, makes them feel that they were a "thousand times better off" in Chiapas (Manz 158-166), despite the difficulties.

It is necessary to understand that the situation of the refugees is affected by the changes that are taking place in Guatemala and by the conditions in the host countries, México, and the United States, respectively. In all the cases, the Mayans' situation is somehow illegal or precarious. The ones who return to Guatemala are looked upon suspiciously by the

army, and even by their neighbors. The ones who are in Mexico lack legal status outside the camps, and are constrained to them. Finally, the ones who come to the United States are openly illegal.

According with Aguayo, the situation of Central American refugees in Mexico City generally is desperate. Seventy-five percent of them are unemployed, and the Mexican government does not recognize them as refugees. This is the main reason they try to come to the United States (Aguayo 1985: 114).

The situation of the Guatemalan refugees in México and the U.S., and the period of "La violencia" in Colombia, invites comparison in the terms that they were both the result of a "hidden war" in Manz' terms. In Colombia it produced 200,000 people killed between 1946-1966. As Zamosc states, "The Violencia was a conflict thoroughly marked by political determination." This is also the case of Guatemala. And he continues, "The struggle was not waged along class lines. On the contrary, it was vertical opposition based upon the peasants loyalty to political bosses on each side. Only in the last stages did the axis of the conflict start to steer towards a horizontal dimension of class struggle. Seeing that things were running out of control, the Liberal and Conservatives installed a military government in 1953 to pacify the country" (Zamosc 1982: 6-7).

The victims of the Violence, besides those murdered, as in Guatemala, were the orphans, widows, and relocated people.

Most of the refugees went to places in the same region, mainly to small towns, not to Bogotá and the other big cities (Arturo 1987). Eventually, they become integrated in the process of migration that has taken place in Colombia in the last 40 years. In brief, the process does not have the racist and ethnic implications that it has in Guatemala but, nonetheless, the changes in the towns, regions, and the country in general were remarkable. The psychological scars are deep in both cases. Neal Boothby (1985) showed that in the case of the Mayan children in Indiantown. In my own research among industrial workers in Bogotá (Arturo 1987), the most vivid memories are of having to move and flee because of the struggle. Several of the workers remember their periods of orphanage as one of the worst aspects of their childhood.

In conclusion, several theoretical approaches can be used in the study of peoples relocated by force, and how they survive culturally. At the micro and middle level, the community studies as presented by Arensberg and Kimball can be very useful. As Burns stressed, Indiantown (as a community) offered a safe haven from both the violence of Guatemala and the anomie of the large cities of Los Angeles, California, and Phoenix, Arizona (1988 a: 6). Yearly, the Fiesta de San Miguel is an occasion for the renewal of the cultural and social bonds of the Mayan communities in U.S., resembling the Year Bearer's celebration in Guatemala.

Complementary to the community approach is the consideration of structural and international forces that influence and produce changes in the communities, as discussed in Chapter Two. In the case of the refugees, several studies have been done (Fahim 1983, Hansen and Oliver-Smith 1985, Oliver-Smith 1987). But besides theoretical positions, what is more valuable is the courage of anthropologists to use their methodology and their skills to provide a voice for those whose voices are hidden or repressed, to present the situation as it is, as many have done in the case of Guatemala.



APPENDIX B  
HEAVEN: THE POSADAS OF 1988

One event that is important for understanding the Purgatory that Mayans have to endure for coming and staying in this country is the *Posadas of 1988*, an event that took place in Saint Ignatius Cathedral. It was an event of survival and rebirth that put together many issues in the life of the immigrants, including the importance of work and lack of housing and shelter. It also points to the duality that the immigrants live as important workers but not as citizens of a town or region. So it would be better if they would evaporate as soon as they finish their work. The Posadas episode also pointed to the double standard of the government, through the INS enforcement and laws about immigration, as stated before.

The Posadas in Guatemala

The Posadas is the way in which Mayans and Guatemalans in general celebrate the nine days before the birth of Jesus or a period known as the *novenario*. It is universally celebrated from the 16th to the 24 of December by Roman Catholics.

I am going to present the traditional way as it is celebrated in Maya custom, through the tale of Ignacio, the

Tzutuhil Indian peasant of The Son of Tecún Umán and Campesino (Sexton and Bizarro Upjan 1985: 269-271).

The tale of Ignacio describes the preparations for the Posadas as follows: the *cofrades* (officials of *cofradías*, special religious brotherhoods that organize the main religious feast days in towns) carry small images of the Virgin and St. Joseph that they receive from the *alcalde* (head) of the *cofradía* of St. Joseph. According with the narrative of Ignacio, on the last day the house that accepts them is the house of the *alcalde*, which has the big image of the Virgin. On 24 December, Ignacio continues, they take the Virgin to the church for the birth of Jesus. This signifies, he says, that, according to the Bible, Mary and Joseph could not find shelter that night in Bethel.

For San Jose (the pseudonym for the town where Ignacio lives on the shore of Lake Atitlán), the *cofradía* divides into two groups. The first one goes to the house where they are going to put Mary and Joseph and shuts the door without a light. Meanwhile, the other group goes to accompany Mary and Joseph until they arrive at the homesite. In song, they begin to ask for lodging, but the group inside refuses it. Finally they convince the group inside the house to open the door, and the group outside carries in the images. This is done for nine days from 16 to 24 December at different houses.

This is the song they sing when Mary and Joseph arrive at the house. The group outside sings:

- "Here at your door, after a hard journey, we beg shelter for the love of God."

The group inside answers:

- "Here there is no inn. On your way, pilgrims from strange roads. Who knows who you are?"

The group outside says:

- "We pilgrims are in all the houses, shelter we ask, you look at us like strangers."

The group inside answers:

- "Say who you are. Perhaps you are friends."

The group outside:

- "They are Joseph and Mary, who come very tired, from Nazareth."

The group inside receiving them:

- "Come in with us, pilgrims. Peace and happiness be with you tonight."

Each night the procession begins from the church. The last procession is from the house of the *cofradía* to take the large image of the Virgin to the church on Christmas Eve where it stays for three days. Then the *cofrades* take it back to the *cofradía* (leader's house).

On 24 December, after they carry Mary and Joseph to their *cofradía*, at 11:00 at night they leave in a procession for the church to celebrate the birth of Jesus. As Ignacio explains, this is also an occasion for celebration with friends and especially among the *cofrades*, eating tamales and drinking.

An important aspect of the celebration in *Las Posadas* in Guatemala noted by James Sexton is that the nine night visits to the houses are prearranged and the real owner of the house and the women's group, Daughters of Mary, and anyone else who wants to participate, comprise the first group inside the house. The *cofrades* always comprise the second group outside the house because they are the leaders in charge of the procession. Finally, the *cofrades*, another group of Daughters of Mary and whoever else has joined them outside are all let into the house. They then have a religious celebration, and the owner may offer coffee, tea, liquor, *atole* (a hot beverage prepared with maize), and other refreshments. Taking into account the poverty of the place, Ignacio adds that there may be houses where nothing is offered if they do not have anything.

West Palm Beach, FL:  
The Posadas of the 22nd of December 1988

What follows is the script of the play performed that night before a full cathedral of mostly Mayan immigrants. It was written by several persons (including me) with the cultural assistance of Cohise and Mario from San Miguel, and the priest Father Frank O'Laughlin. This is how all the people attending the cathedral service learned about the context of this special drama.

Mayas immigrants, as native Americans, flee from the violence in Guatemala and come the U.S. looking for shelter

and peace. The refugees mostly work as farm workers for the small and big citrus and vegetable growers. To remain here they need "a shelter" through which they gain political asylum and work permits. The government of the United States, through the I.N.S., denies the extension of the work permits. In analogy, the Sacred Family, Joseph, Mary, and the unborn Jesus, also had to look for shelter in a hostile world. Today, 2,000 years later, they come back in a symbolic fashion, but they are rejected again, in contrast with all the celebrations that people are do in marking Jesus' first arrival to earth. As a metaphor for the Maya's dilemma, this Posada was developed.

#### First scene

Scenario. One Mayan group is performing ceremonials for the preservation of nature, the fertility of land, and on behalf of justice and peace. For the ceremonies they follow their cosmological principles, as they have done for hundreds of years.

Players. A group of Mayan men and women of different ages. The chorus is a group of ancients, men who throughout the play repeat these universal principles and wise sayings.

#### The Chorus:

- "The god of the universe has created all the human beings equal. We have a great respect for nature and we take care of the land, the animals, the plants. All the

creatures share the same breath, and share the same destiny."

"Human beings should care for nature in order to be supported by nature. This is the only way for human beings to be close to their brothers and creators. We ask you peace, oh God of the Universe, of the Earth and the Sky."

### Second scene

Scenario. Near Indiantown, in the orchards, a group of Mayans is waiting to be picked up and returned home. The boss and the crew leader are discussing the difficult situation because of the negative attitude of the I.N.S. about extending work permits, and because of the problems in Indiantown.

Players. The boss, the crew leader.

The boss: Now, that Japan has signed a new contract for the exportation of citrus products, we are going to need many farm workers.

The crew leader: That is right. That is one of the reasons why the government has contracted for a study to know how many workers we are going to need for the next years.

The boss: But now, the I.N.S. does not want to renew the work permits of the Mayans, and they are such a good workers.

The crew leader: Yes, I know. I also have heard that these people are living in very bad conditions in Indiantown. Seems to be problems there.

The boss: Yes, we asked just for workers, but they sent us refugees.

### Third scene

Scenario. A group of Mayans, fleeing from the violence in Guatemala finds sanctuary in Indiantown. They are staying there, working hard. But in order to stay and continue to work, they need to ask for political asylum and get a work permit. The Mayans go to the I.N.S. office. The judge denies the political asylum and the extension of the work permits. The Mayans are in danger of being deported. A child asks his mother for an explanation of the situation.

Players. The Chorus, the petitioners, the judge, a mother, her son.

The Chorus: We have been prosecuted for five centuries. Now, we come fleeing from the murder of our friends and relatives, from the kidnapping and rape of our women, from the destruction of our crops and villages, from the military control of our culture and lives. God wish that we can find peace in this promised land. All we want is to live and work in peace. Is it too much to ask?

The refugees present their petitions for political asylum and the extension of work permits to the judge. They make it in a dramatic style they need to work and because it is impossible to go back to Guatemala. The judge denies the political asylum and also the extension of the work permit,

arguing that there is no evidence. One child asks his mother, what is a refugee.

The Chorus: We are the descendants of the ancient Maya, and because of that we have suffered persecution. We have been persecuted by Spanish colonialism and under the military regimes now. The only peace we knew in Guatemala was the peace of the cemeteries. We are refugees from economic and political violence, and now we are persecuted by the I.N.S.

The son (asks his mother): Mama, what it is a refugee? What does it mean? That we are not going to be persecuted any more? That we are going to be able to work in the orchards?

The mother: My son, we are God's children, honest workers. Being together and organized, we can ask for our rights. God protect us.

The chorus: We invoke, oh God, a higher law. It is God's law that underlies human rights. Human beings cannot deny us the right to work. They cannot condemn us to starvation; they cannot deny our right to live. Now as 2,000 years ago they want their hands clean. Oh God, we invoke your law.

#### Fourth Scene

Scenario. The sacred family, Joseph and Mary, arrives looking for a place of shelter. They knock in several doors, but the access are denied. Finally, they find shelter in a stable. But their situation is of uncertainty.



Players. Joseph, Mary, unborn Jesus.

### Epilogue

Scenario. The Archbishop, in a symbolic act receives the Mayans and the Sacred Family. The Mayans give him Mayan symbols of peace.

### Analysis

The play was presented at the evening mass on December 22, 1988, at 8 p.m. It was covered by two television networks, and presented on the 11 p.m. news on a local channel and as part of a national broadcast. I recorded both. Thus, the siltation received media and public attention for 90 seconds!

At the start of 1989, the I.N.S. began to give work permits to the asylum applicants, possibly an outcome of this publicity.

The Posadas in West Palm Beach constituted a protest against the policies of the U.S. government and the I.N.S. by addressing the double standard of accepting Mayan when needed as workers and rejecting them as needy persons. It was a political act by vulnerable people who utilized the only possible safe way they could to express themselves. Being illegal, or *semi-legals* as we have labeled them in this thesis, they were unable to use more open political methods

such as through trade-union action or election of representatives or street protests. Those were unavailable.

In addition, the protest against political oppression and inequality through religious drama was not new for them. In using the Posadas they used an traditional element in their culture that has been employed since conquest to respond to violence in Guatemala.

The similitude in both plays, in the village on Lake Atitlán and West Palm Beach, besides being the same religious celebration, builds on the image of refugee pilgrims who are removed from their place of origin because of political forces, people who are weak and in need of help and shelter. They, as pilgrim refugees, do not ask for welfare, schools or social security. They ask only for work, a special feature of Mayans.

The preparation for the play were also important, as it brought together people from many Mayan municipalities--San Miguel, Jacaltenango, Sololá, and San Juan Ixcoy, and it synthesizes their views. Crew leaders helped the production of the Posadas by letting people to leave work early and in some cases lending the trucks and drivers to transport people to the Cathedral.

In preparation for the event, Mario stressed the importance of the senior citizen (*señor mayor*) who is the spokesperson of the community. He was the one with a candle at the front of the procession, a person chosen because of his

physical appearance and appropriate gestures who could give a powerful performance. In the play, he was noticed at once by the TV cameramen and the next day was on the first page of several newspapers. Ironically, the role of these spokesmen, the *señores mayores*, has diminished in the immigrant community. They are not consulted and taken into account in major decisions in the U.S.

While in the practice sessions for the play, Mario spoke in Kanjobal, while trying to use words all the Mayan people from other places could understand. People carried signs with the name of the home or towns so that everyone could see that it was not only people from San Miguel involved, but those from other places in Guatemala as well.

Choosing the actors was amusing because of the many ironies in selecting persons to play the Virgin Mary, the judge, the man from the *migra*, and the owner of the orchards. All of this was managed with cathartic, high humor. The presentations for TV and the newspapers were written in English, so the Maya could not read them, but they knew what they said.

Mario stressed the importance that the public know that the violence did not stop in 1984 or 1985, but was still very much present in Huehuetenango. He also empathized that the main issue was that I.N.S. open the doors for asylum

applicants. Finally, he told the people to remember that while today they were having hard times, the future would be better.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Julián Arturo was born in Bogotá, Colombia, in 1946. He attended college at the *Universidad de Los Andes*, where he earned the degree of *Licenciado en Antropología* in 1970. He also earned a master's degree in Anthropology at University of Florida, Gainesville, in 1987.

Julian Arturo has worked for twenty years at the National University of Colombia, at Bogotá, where he is currently an Associate Professor. There, he has been Chair of the Anthropology Department, editor of *Maguaré*, journal of the Anthropology Department, Chair of the Professor Committee of Human Sciences Faculty, member of the Directive Council of Human Sciences Faculty, and member of the Deans and Academic Councils of National University.

Julián Arturo has published two books and several articles. He is also the Chair of *URBANOS*, a non-profit anthropological organization who conducts research and applied programs in urban environments in Colombia.

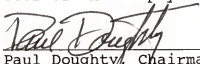
Professor Arturo has being co-organizer of two congresses of Anthropology in Colombia, and several seminars and symposium.

While doing his doctoral studies at Gainesville, Julián Arturo was a fellow of the Interamerican Foundation. In 1988

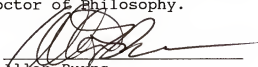
and 1989, and then in 1993 he has worked with Corn Maya, a non-profit organization of Mayans in Indiantown, South Florida. Upon his arrival back in Bogotá in 1989 professor Arturo been a member of PRIAC (Interdisciplinary Applied Programs for Communities) of the National University in Ciudad Bolívar, one of the poorest zones in Colombia.

Julián Arturo is the proud father of two sons, Antonio, eighteen, and Emilio, fourteen.


I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Paul Doughty, Chairman  
Distinguished Service  
Professor of Anthropology  
and Latin American Studies


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Allan Burns  
Professor of Anthropology  
and Latin American Studies

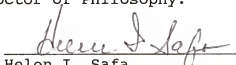
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Anthony Oliver-Smith  
Professor of Anthropology  
and Latin American Studies

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George Pozzetta  
Professor of History

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Professor of Anthropology  
and Latin American Studies

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

April, 1994

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Dean, Graduate School